ON LIFE AND LETTERS
BY ANATOLE FRANCE

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THE WORKS OF ANATOLE FRANCE
IN AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION
EDITED BY J. LEWIS MAY AND
BERNARD MIALL

ON LIFE & LETTERS

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BY ANATOLE FRANCE

A TRANSLATION BY
BERNARD MIALL

FOURTH
SERIES

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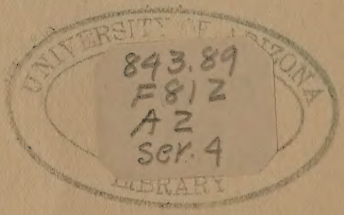

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PREFACE

IN publishing this fourth volume of *Life and Letters,* I am accomplishing a most pleasant duty in thanking the reading public for the kindly welcome which they have extended to the first three volumes. I do not deserve this favour; but if I were in any way worthy of it, it would be because I have paid a great deal of attention to feeling, and none to the spirit of system. I do not know just what I ought to call these causeries; probably they are too devoid of form to have a name. Certainly the most inappropriate term that could be applied to them is that of critical reviews. I am not in the very least a critic. I am quite incapable of working the thrashing-machines into which skilful persons throw the literary harvest in order to divide the grain from the chaff. There are such things as fairy tales. If there are also such things as literary tales, these are such rather than criticisms.

Everything in them has been felt. I have been sincere to the point of candour. To say what one thinks is a costly pleasure, but it is so keen a delight that I can never renounce it. As for inventing theories, that is a vain pursuit which has no temptations for me.

What makes one distrustful of æsthetics is that anything can be proved by reasoning. Zeno of Elea has demonstrated that the flying arrow is motionless. One might also prove the contrary,

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although, to confess the truth, it would be more difficult. For the reasoning faculty is amazed by the obvious, and we may say that everything is capable of proof excepting the things that we feel are true. A consecutive argument upon a complex subject will never prove anything but the intellectual capacity of him who conducts it. M. Maurice Barrès was well advised when he said, in an exquisite little volume*: "That which distinguishes an argument from a play upon words is that the latter cannot be translated." Mankind must have some suspicion of this great truth, for they never rule themselves by reason. Instinct and feeling are their guides. They obey their passions—love, hatred, and above all, salutary fear. They prefer religions to philosophies, and never reason except to justify their evil tendencies or bad actions, which is ludicrous but pardonable. The most instinctive operations are generally those in which they best succeed, and nature has based on these alone the preservation of life and the perpetuation of the species. The philosophical systems have succeeded by reason of their authors' genius, but one is never able to recognize in any of them the qualities of truth which cause them to prevail. In the matter of morality all opinions have been sustained, and if many of these appear to agree, this is only because the moralists have for the most part been careful not to quarrel with popular feeling and the common instincts. Pure reason, if they had listened to nothing else, would have led them by different paths to the most monstrous conclusions, as we see in the case of certain religious sects and certain heresies, whose authors, exalted by solitude, have disdained the unreflecting

* *Tout licence sauf contre l'amour*, 1892, cr. 8vo.

assent of mankind. It would seem that the learned Cainite, who, judging creation to be evil, taught the faithful to offend against the moral and physical laws of the world, after the example of criminals, and best of all in imitation of Cain and Judas, reasoned very correctly; but her morality was abominable. This sacred and salutary truth lies at the bottom of all religions, that there is a safer guide for man than his reason, and that we must listen to the heart when it speaks.

In æsthetics, that is, in the clouds, one can argue more and better than in any other subject. It is in this connection that we must be distrustful. In this connection we must fear everything: indifference as much as partiality, coldness as much as passion, knowledge as much as ignorance, art, intellect, subtlety, and innocence more dangerous than cunning. In matters of æsthetics you will be chary of sophisms, above all when they are pretty ones, and some of them are admirable. You will not even believe in the mathematical spirit; for mathematics, so complete, so sublime, is yet so delicate a machine that it can work only in a vacuum, and a grain of sand in the wheels will suffice to throw it out of gear. One shudders on reflecting whither this grain of sand may lead a mathematical brain. Think of Pascal!

Æsthetics is based upon nothing solid. It is a castle in the air. Some have sought to base it upon ethics. But there is no such thing as ethics. There is no such thing as sociology. Nor is there such a thing as biology. The completion of the sciences never existed save in the mind of M. Auguste Comte, whose work is a prophecy. When biology has been created, that is in a few million years' time, we shall

perhaps be able to construct a sociology. It will be the work of a great many centuries; after which it will be permissible to create an æsthetic science on solid foundations. But then our planet will be very aged, and near the limits of its destiny. The sun, whose black spots, not without reason, already cause us anxiety, will show the earth only a dull red fuliginous disk half covered with opaque scoriæ, and the last human beings, withdrawn to the depths of the mines, will be less anxious to discuss the essence of the beautiful than to burn their last morsels of coal in the darkness before perishing in the midst of the eternal ice.

In order to give a basis to criticism we speak of tradition and universal consent. There are no such things. It is true that an almost general opinion favours certain works. But this is by virtue of a prepossession; not in the least as a matter of choice or as the result of a spontaneous preference. The works that everybody admires are those that no one examines. We receive them as a precious burden which we pass on to others without glancing at them. Do you really imagine that there is any great degree of liberty in the approbation which we extend to the Greek and Latin classics—or even to our own? Is the taste that attracts us to one work of art and repels us from another really free? Is it not determined by a great number of circumstances alien to the content of the work, the principal among which is the spirit of imitation, so powerful in men and animals? This spirit of imitation is a necessity if we are to live without going too far astray; we import it into all our actions and it dominates our æsthetic sense. Without it our opinions in the province of art would be far more various than they are

already. It is because of this tendency that a work of art which has, to begin with, for whatever reason, obtained the acceptance of a few persons is thereupon accepted by a larger number. The first alone were free; all the rest do no more than obey. Their opinions have neither spontaneity nor value, nor are they founded on judgment or capacity of any sort. And by their number they establish fame. All depends on a very small beginning. Thus we see that works of art which are undervalued at their birth have little chance of pleasing later; while, on the other hand, works that have been celebrated from the first retain their reputation for a long time and are valued even after they have become unintelligible. What proves that agreement is purely the result of prepossession is that it ceases with the latter. One might give many examples of this. I will record only one. Fifteen years ago in an examination for admission to one year's voluntary service in the army the military examiners gave the candidates a page of dictation, unsigned, which, being quoted in various newspapers, was derided with a great deal of spirit and excited the gaiety of highly cultivated readers.—Where, it was asked, did these officers find such uncouth and ridiculous phrases?—Nevertheless, they had taken the passage from a very fine book. It was Michelet, and the best Michelet; Michelet of the best period. The officers had taken the text of their dictation from that brilliant description of France with which the great writer closes the first volume of his *History*, one of the most admired passages in the book: *"In latitude the belts of France are easily identified by their products. In the North the rich low-lying plains of Belgium and Flanders with their fields of flax and*

colza, and hops, bitter vine of the north, etc." I have seen critics laughing at this style, which they believed that of some old army captain. The man who laughed loudest was an ardent admirer of Michelet. This is an admirably written page, but in order to be admired by unanimous consent it would have had to be signed. It is the same with every page written by the hand of man. On the other hand, anything covered by a great name has the good fortune to be blindly praised. Victor Cousin discovered sublimities in Pascal which have been recognized as the errors of the copyist. He went into ecstasies, for example, over certain "raccourcis d'abîme" that were the result of careless proof reading. One cannot imagine M. Cousin admiring these "raccourcis d'abîme" in the work of a contemporary. The rhapsodies of a Vrain-Lucas were favourably accepted by the Academy of Sciences under the names of Pascal and Descartes. Ossian, when he was believed to be ancient, was thought the equal of Homer. He is despised now he is known to be Macpherson.

When men exhibit a common admiration and give one another the reasons for it, concord is changed into discord. In a single book they approve of contrary things which cannot exist together.

A very interesting work would be the history of the varying criticisms of one of those works to which humanity has paid the greatest attention: *Hamlet,* the *Divine Comedy* or the *Iliad.* The *Iliad* delights us to-day by a barbaric and primitive quality which many of us discover in it in all good faith. In the seventeenth century Homer was praised for having observed the rules of the epic.

"Be assured," said Boileau, "that if Homer has employed the word dog it is because that word is noble in the Greek." These ideas are ridiculous to us. Ours will perhaps appear equally ridiculous in two hundred years' time, for after all we cannot rank the statements that Homer is barbaric and that barbarism is admirable among the eternal truths. In questions of literature there is not a single opinion that cannot easily be opposed by a contrary opinion. Who could ever terminate the disputes of the flute-players?

This volume was sent to the press by my publisher, by my most respected friend, M. Calmann Lévy, whom we had the misfortune to lose last June. M. Ernest Renan and M. Ludovic Halévy have said of this excellent man, in words that cannot be bettered, all that needed to be said, and I should, after them, be silent if it were not my duty to give testimony in my turn.

M. Calmann Lévy succeeded his brother in the management of the publishing business in 1879. He had been associated with it since 1844.

The business remained prosperous and increased in his hands. To-day it publishes or reprints yearly more than two million volumes or plays.

M. Calmann Lévy had relations with nearly all the celebrated writers of his time. He lived on terms of intimate acquaintance with Guizot, Victor Hugo, Tocqueville, Sainte-Beuve, Alexandre Dumas, Mérimée, Ampère, Octave Feuillet, Sandeau, Murger, Nisard, the Duc d'Aumale, the Duc de Broglie, Comte d'Haussonville, Prévost-Paradol, Alexandre Dumas fils, Ludovic Halévy, and so many others that their names would fill several pages of this book. I must at least mention the particularly

cordial nature of his relations with M. Ernest Renan. This was a legacy from Michel Lévy. M. Renan has given a charming description in his *Souvenirs* of his first meeting with the publisher to whom he has remained faithful. These excellent relations were continued even more cordially with M. Calmann, when he became, on the death of his elder brother, the sole head of the business.

M. Calmann Lévy was the most sympathetic of men. To everything he brought an extreme vivacity allied with an exquisite kindliness. I believe he was beloved by all who knew him. He had a genius for business affairs of an extensive nature, and his indefatigable attention did not neglect the smallest details. We loved his kindly laugh, his gaiety, his frankness, even his abruptness; for in his very abruptness he retained all his delicacy of feeling. He was reliable, loyal, obliging. He loved to give pleasure. And absorbed as he was in vast undertakings, he interested himself in the smallest affairs of his friends. A great publisher is a sort of minister of *belles-lettres*. He must have the qualities of a statesman. M. Calmann Lévy possessed these qualities. He was always well informed. He had a wonderful knowledge, from his point of view, of the whole of contemporary literature. He had all the authors and their books at his fingers' ends. He exhibited perfect tact in his relations with men of letters. With absolute good nature he realized the finest gradations. He understood admirably how to content the great and encourage the small. He was in truth an excellent Minister of Letters.

But what gave a peculiar charm to his good qualities was the modesty with which he bore himself. This modesty was profound and natural. No one

ever saw a simpler man, less puffed up with his good fortune. He retained the candour of a child, and in his hours of leisure he enjoyed the society of children.

There was no affectation in this excellent man, and if he lingered complacently over any honourable period of his life, that period was that of his laborious beginnings, when he had, by his zeal, encouraged his brother Michel. The only pride that he displayed on occasion was his pride in his obscure beginnings.

This is not the place to paint him as he was in family life, in which he revealed the most lovable domestic virtues. It is not for me to show him, like a patriarch, at his table, surrounded with children and grandchildren. The regrets that he has left behind him there will never be effaced. But I may perhaps be allowed to say a few words of what he was to me. I may be permitted to pay my debt to his memory. Calmann Lévy welcomed me in the days of my obscurity, encouraged me, and sought a thousand times, by his delightful scolding, to arouse me from my indolence and timidity. He smiled upon my humble successes. He was more a friend than a publisher. Many others will render him the same testimony. For myself, it is from the very depths of my heart that I associate myself with the incomparable grief of his widow and his children, and with the profound regrets of all his collaborators and his authors.

On the very morrow of M. Calmann Lévy's death, M. Ludovic Halévy wrote the lines which I am about to quote:

"Calmann Lévy was one of the best, most intelligent and most upright men I have ever known.

"He remained young to the last hour of his life. He possessed that great virtue without which life

has truly no meaning: the passion for work. One may say that he had two families. First of all, the family of his heart: his wife, his sons, his daughter, his grandchildren, all so tenderly loved by him. . . . And how this tenderness was repaid to him! Then what I may call his working family, his collaborators in the Rue Auber. It was a pleasure to see him coming and going in the huge warehouse of his publishing business, among those mountains of books, in the midst of his employés; for them he was truly *le patron,* 'the master,' in the old, good sense of the word. For that matter, it was with his employés as it was with his authors; very rarely did they leave him. Thirty years ago, in the Rue Vivienne, I saw children coming to business who arranged the books and made up parcels; I see them to-day in the Rue Auber, with hair turning grey, having become quite distinguished persons, holding important positions. And this, thanks to him whom they continued to call *le patron.*

"Happier than his brother Michel, who had no children, Calmann Lévy was able to give himself the pleasure of saying, as he looked upon his three sons, that his work would be worthily continued by those who bore his name. It could not be in better hands, this heritage of half a century of toil and honour."

It is with all my heart that I associate myself with the feelings so well expressed by M. Halévy. I do so with some authority and knowledge, being already old in "copy" and in books. In M. Calmann Lévy's lifetime I used to see his three sons assisting him in his nice and extensive labours as publisher. I have seen M. Paul Calmann, trained from childhood by his uncle Michel, and long broken in to business, assisting, with his two younger brothers, the old

chief whom we regret, but who lives again in his children. I know by experience how pleasant and dependable MM. Paul, George and Gaston Calmann Lévy are in business. Assuredly the legacy of work and honour left by their father could not be better placed than in their hands.

A. F.

May, 1892.

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ON LIFE & LETTERS

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MADAME ACKERMANN

MADAME ACKERMANN is lately dead. I had the honour of her acquaintance. I used to see her when she had escaped from Nice, in the summer, in her little room overlooking the Rue des Feuillantines, full of the shade and the pale reflections of the tall trees. She was an old lady of humble appearance. The thick knitted shawl that enveloped her cheeks hid her white hair, her last adornment, which she despised as she had despised all the rest. Her person, her clothing, her attitude spoke of an immemorial disdain of earthly pleasures and one felt from the first moment that this lady had from all time had a quarrel with nature.

"What!" cried M. Paul Desjardins when some one pointed her out one day as she passed him in the street; "is that Madame Ackermann? She looks like a woman who lets out chairs in the parks."

And it is a fact; she did look like a chair-woman. But she was a strong thinker, and her audacious mind had freed itself of the vain terrors that rule the general run of human beings.

Louise Choquet was reared in the country. Her best moments—so she has told us—were those which she spent sitting in a corner of the garden, watching the gnats, the ants and, above all, the earwigs. Like

many intelligent children she had great difficulty in learning to read. The catechism drove her nearly crazy with terror. When she was a little older a good priest took great pains to explain the Christian doctrine to her; and she followed his instruction with extreme attention. When it was finished she had ceased to believe, absolutely and for ever. Early left an orphan, she went to live in Berlin with some excellent people in whose house she met Alexander von Humboldt, Varnhergen, Jean Müller, Boekh, and other scientists and philosophers. Already her mind was formed and her understanding equipped. Already there was within her that profound pessimism which has since flashed out upon the world.

There she was loved by a gentle scholar, Ackermann by name, who used to compile dictionaries, dreaming of the happiness of the human race. She consented to marry him after assuring herself that he thought, with her, that life is evil and that it is a crime to give life to others. After two years of peaceful union Ackermann died amid his books, and his widow retired to Nice, to an old Dominican convent still divided into cells. There she had a tower built whence she could overlook the blue bay and the white peaks of the Piedmontese Alps, and there she died after forty-four years of solitude. Every morning, like old Rollin in his house at Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, she used to go out, as soon as she had risen, to see how her fruit-trees had spent the night. From time to time, amid the peace of her monotonous days, she wrote those despairing verses which have outlived her. No career was ever more uniform than hers. This audacious thinker lived the most regular life.

"I may be bold in my philosophical speculations," she would say, "but, on the other hand, I have

always been extremely circumspect in my conduct. That will easily be understood. People rarely commit imprudences unless because of their passions; and I have never felt any save those of the mind." Her sole sensual delight was to see her almond-trees in bloom; and her one happiness to talk of Pascal with M. Ernest Havet.

Without asking Heaven for help she exercised the virtues of those holy women, those veiled widows whom the Church celebrates. Her modesty, of course, was ferocious.

The mere idea of a sensual weakness horrified her; and she avoided with disgust those whom she suspected of being too greatly attached to the things of the flesh. When she had said of a woman, "She is a creature of instinct," that amounted to a final dismissal. In this respect her strictness was sometimes inconceivable. She broke with one who had been her friend from childhood because the poor lady, then more than sixty years of age, had one day when sitting by the fire passed the tongs to a very old gentleman with too sensual a manner! I was there when the thing happened. I remember we were speaking of Kant and the categorical imperative. For my part, I saw nothing that was not innocent in these two old people and the tongs. Nevertheless the lady sitting beside the fire was driven forth never to return. Madame Ackermann considered that she was instinctive. She never went back on it.

Madame Ackermann was capable of a sort of simple and upright friendship. She had gathered together, on her holidays in Paris, a sort of intellectual family. Like all fine thinkers, she loved youth. Dr. Pozzi and M. Joseph Reinach have not

forgotten the days when she used to call them her children. She was in despair whenever one of her young friends married. For her, although her own had gone smoothly enough, though restricted by conditions, marriage was evil, and the greatest of evils, for her innocence did not suspect the existence of other evils. She was a philosopher: the innocence of philosophers is unfathomable. To her thinking a man married was a man lost. Only think of it! Women, even the most virtuous, are so "instinctive!" She shuddered at the mere thought. Those who did not know her will never know what a puritan atheist is like. And yet—O profound penetralia of the heart, O secret contradictions of the soul! I believe that at bottom, and quite unknown to herself, she had a certain preference for "bad eggs," at all events, in poetry. She was crazy over Musset. In fact, this obstinate contemner of love, one day, in the shade of her orange-trees, wrote this reflection in the little manuscript book in which she used to record the secrets of her soul: "Love, they accuse thee and curse thee in vain: it is always to thee that one must come to ask for energy, for ardour!"

Like all solitaries, she was full of herself. She knew no one but herself, and she was always reciting her own words. She used to carry in her pocket a little manuscript autobiography which she read to all comers and eventually printed. Her finest verses, inserted in the *Revue moderne,* had attracted no attention. It was an article by M. Caro that suddenly made them known. After that she had a group of fervent admirers.

I was one of them, but not a prominent one. Her poetry astonished rather than charmed me; and

I could not praise her in excess of my opinion. She was sensitive in this respect, and as she was just at heart and direct by nature, she said to me one day:

"What do you find lacking in my verses, then, that you don't like them?"

I confessed that, fine as they were, they dismayed me a little by their arid majesty. I apologized for my natural frivolity.

"Like children," I told her, "I love pictures, and you despise them. You are no doubt right to have none."

For a moment she was dumbfounded; then, in utter astonishment, she cried:

"No pictures! What are you saying? I have no pictures? But I have 'The Skiff.' Is not 'The Skiff' a picture? And isn't that enough for anyone? The skiff on a stormy sea! The skiff on a calm lake! What more do you want?"

To be sure, she had "The Skiff," had good Madame Ackermann! She had also the reef and the blast, the valley, the coppice, the eagle and the dove, and the bosom of the air, and the heart of the woods, and the bosom of nature. Her poetic vocabulary consisted of all the old lumber of her childhood.

And yet these verses, with their outworn forms, their faded colours, made a great impression upon the minds of the elect; her poetry found an echo in thoughtful souls, her unadorned, almost unbeautiful muse was given the seat of honour by the fireside of reflective and studious men. Why? There was, of course, a reason. Madame Ackermann instilled into her poetry a thing so rare that people thought it unique: seriousness, a strong conviction. This woman expressed, in her solitude, with absolute sincerity, her idea of the world and of life. In this

respect I can think of no one, excepting M. Sully Prudhomme, who can be compared with her. She was, like him, with less mental scope, but greater energy, a true philosophical poet. She had a passion for ideas. It is in this that she was great. Whether she shows us the Last Judgement with the dead refusing to rise at the summons of the angel and rejecting even happiness since it is God, the author of evil, who brings it to them; or whether she says to this God: "You have taken from me him whom I loved; how shall I recognize him when you have made him one of the blessed? Keep him: I would rather never behold him again"; or whether she cries to Nature: "In vain you pursue your obscure ideal through your infinite creations: you will never give birth to anything but suffering and death," she strikes a note of passionate meditation, she is a poet by virtue of the reflective audacity of blasphemy; all the ungraceful folds of her speech fall away; we see only the robust nudity and the sublime gesture of her thought.

We admire her; we are moved by her; we feel a tremendous sympathy for her; and we murmur these words of the poet, Alfred de Vigny: "All those who strive against the unjust heavens have the admiration and the secret love of mankind."

Remember the chorus of *Les Malheureux,* who do not wish to be born again even to taste an eternal but tardy bliss:

> Près de nous la jeunesse a passé les mains vides,
> Sans nous avoir fêtés, sans nous avoir souri.
> Les sources de l'amour sur nos lèvres avides
> Comme une eau fugitive, au printemps ont tari.
> Dans nos sentiers brûlés pas une fleur ouverte,
> Si, pour aider nos pas, quelque soutien chéri

Parfois s'offrait à nous sur la route déserte,
Lorsque nous les touchions, nos appuis se brisaient;
Tout devenait roseau quand nos cœurs s'y posaient.
Au gouffre que pour nous creusait la Destinée
Une invisible main nous poussait acharnée.
Comme un bourreau, craignant de nous voir échapper,
A nos côtés marchait le Malheur inflexible.
Nous portions une plaie à chaque endroit sensible,
Et l'aveugle Hasard savait où nous frapper.

Peut-être aurions-nous droit aux célestes délices;
Non! ce n'est point à nous de redouter l'enfer,
Car nos fautes n'ont pas mérité de supplices;
Si nous avons failli, nous avons tant souffert!
Eh bien! nous renonçons même à cette espérance,
D'entrer dans ton royaume et de voir tes splendeurs;
Seigneur, nous refusons jusqu'à ta récompense,
Et nous ne voulons pas du prix de nos douleurs.

Nous le savons, tu peux donner encor des ailes
Aux âmes qui ployaient sous un fardeau trop lourd;
Tu peux, lorsqu'il te plaît, loin des sphères mortelles
Les élever à toi dans la grâce et l'amour;
Tu peux, parmi les chœurs qui chantent tes louanges.
A tes pieds, sous tes yeux, nous mettre au premier rang,
Nous faire couronner par la main de tes anges,
Nous revêtir de gloire en nous transfigurant,
Tu peux nous pénétrer d'une vigueur nouvelle,
Nous rendre le désir que nous avions perdu . . .
Oui, mais le Souvenir, cette ronce immortelle
Attachée à nos cœurs, l'en arracheras tu? . . . . *

---

* Youth passed by us with empty hands,
Without having feasted us, without having smiled at us.
The springs of love beneath our eager lips
Like a fugitive stream, dried up in the springtide.
Parched and flowerless were the paths we trod,
And if to aid our steps some kindly support
Offered itself to us upon the desolate road,
When we touched them the props we leaned on broke;
Everything became a reed when our hearts leant upon it.
Into the abyss that Destiny dug for us

Remember, too, man's imprecations of Nature:

Eh bien! reprends-le donc ce peu de fange obscure,
Qui pour quelques instants s'anima sous ta main;
Dans ton dédain superbe, implacable Nature,
Brise à jamais le moule humain!

Dans ces tristes débris, quand tu verrais, ravie,
D'autre créations éclore à grands essaims,
Ton Idée éclater en des formes de vie
Plus dociles à tes desseins.

Est-ce à dire que Lui, ton espoir, ta chimère,
Parce qu'il fut rêvé, puisse un jour exister?
Tu crois avoir conçu, tu voudrais être mère;
A l'œuvre! Il s'agit d'enfanter.

An invisible hand implacably pushed us.
Like an executioner, fearing to see us escape,
Beside us marched relentless Woe.
We bore wounds in every tender spot
And blind Chance knew where to strike us.

It may be we should have a right to celestial bliss;
No! it is not for us to fear Hell,
For our faults did not deserve torture;
If we have failed, we have suffered so!
Ah well! we renounce even that hope
Of entering into thy kingdom and beholding thy splendours;
Lord, we refuse even thy reward,
We will not have it at the price of our sufferings.

We know that thou canst give wings again
To souls that were bowed beneath too heavy a burden;
Thou canst if it please thee, far from mortal spheres
Lift them up to thee in grace and love;
Thou canst amid the choirs that sing thy praises
At thy feet, beneath thine eyes, set us in the front rank,
Canst have us crowned by the hands of thine angels,
Canst clothe us with glory, transfiguring us,
Thou canst infuse new vigour into us,
Restore to us the desire that we had lost. . . .
Ay but Memory, that immortal briar
Clinging to our hearts, wilt thou tear it away? . . .

Change en réalité ton attente sublime.
Mais quoi! pour les franchir malgré tous tes élans,
La distance est trop grande et trop profond l'abîme,
Entre ta pensée et tes flancs.

La mort est le seul fruit qu'en tes crises futures
Il te sera donné d'atteindre et de cueillir;
Toujours nouveau débris, toujours des créatures
Que tu devras ensevelir!

Car sur ta route en vain l'âge à l'âge succède
Les tombes, les berceaux ont beau s'accumuler
L'idéal qui te fuit, l'idéal qui t'obsède
A l'infini pour reculer. . . . *

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* So be it! Resume this pinch of obscure dirt
That for a few moments took on life beneath thy hand;
In thy superb disdain, implacable Nature,
Shatter for ever the human mould!

When thou beholdest with delight other creations
Unfold themselves in multitudes from these mournful remains,
Beholdest thine idea flash into the forms of life
More obedient to thy designs,

Is this to say that He, thy hope, thy chimæra,
Because he was dreamed, may one day exist?
Thou thinkest to have conceived: thou wouldst be a mother;
To work then! Let the child be born.

Let thy sublime hope become a reality.
But lo! the distance is too great, the abyss too deep
For thee to cross, despite all thine eagerness,
Between thy thought and thy womb.

Death is the sole fruit that in thy future struggles
Thou wilt be granted to reach and pluck;
Always fresh refuse, always creatures
Which thou wilt have to bury!

For on thy road in vain does age succeed to age,
In vain do tombs and cradles heap themselves up,
The ideal flees thee, the ideal that obsesses thee
Infinitely, only to withdraw.

And it amazes one that this work of despair should have issued from this absolutely uniform, tranquil existence. In her cell, as cold, as chaste, as peaceful as in the days of the sons of Dominic, the recluse of Nice, like an atheistical saint, groaned over the miseries that she did not experience, over the sufferings of all humanity. Gently, she dreamed the dream of life; but she knew it was only a dream. Perhaps it is better to believe in the reality of being and in the Divine goodness, since, if this is an illusion, it is an illusion that indulgent death will not abolish. However it may be with us, those who believe in the survival of the human personality need not fear that they will be undeceived after their death. If, as is infinitely probable, they have hoped in vain, if they have been duped, they will never know it.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

"NOTRE CŒUR"

AY, without a doubt M. de Maupassant is right: manners, ideas, beliefs, opinions, feelings, all change. Each generation brings with it new fashions and fresh prepossessions. This perpetual flux of all forms and ideas is the chief amusement and also the great trial of life. M. Maupassant is right: that which was is no longer and never will be again. Hence the potent charm of the past. M. de Maupassant is right: every twenty-five years men and women discover in life and love a zest which hitherto has not been felt. Our grandmothers were romantic. Their imagination aspired to tragic passions. It was the time when women wore side curls and leg-of-mutton sleeves; the style was popular in those days. The men wore their hair dressed in an erect mop, *en coup de vent.* All they had to do was to brush their hair in a certain fashion each morning. But thanks to this artifice they had the air of travellers wandering on the point of a promontory or the summit of a mountain; they appeared to be perpetually exposed, like M. de Chateaubriand, to the storms of the passions and the tempests that sweep away empires. Human dignity was greatly enhanced thereby. Under Napoleon III manners became freer and expressions more vulgar. In the days of St. Crinoline the women, drawn into a whirlwind of pleasures, went

from ball to ball and supper to supper, living rapidly, loving rapidly and, like Madame Benoiton, never staying at home. Then, when the festival was over, morphia consoled more than one for the melancholy of declining age. And few among them had the exquisite art of growing old gracefully, of ending life in the fashion of the ladies of old who, sedate at last and still coquettish, piously concealed with their laces the relics of their beauty, the remnants of their grace, smiling from a distance at youth, in which they sought the faces of past years. Twenty years have passed since the good days of Madame Benoiton; new feelings have sprung up in new flesh. The present generation has doubtless its own manner of feeling and understanding, loving and desiring. It has its own countenance, its individual spirit, which it is difficult to recognize.

It needs a great deal of observation and a sort of instinct to grasp the character of the period in which we live and to unravel, amid the infinite complexity of contemporary things, the essential features, the typical forms. M. de Maupassant ought to succeed in this as well as and better than anyone, for he has a sure eye and a just intuition. He is perspicacious in a simple manner. His new novel seeks to show us a man and a woman in 1890, to paint for us love, the ancient passion of love, the first-born of the gods, in its present shape, and its last metamorphosis. If the picture is faithful, if the artist has seen his models clearly and copied them faithfully, we must admit that a Parisian woman of our days has but little capacity for a strong passion, a true sentiment.

Michèle de Burne, so pretty with her golden radiance, with her shrewd, smiling face and the

glance of a faded flower, is an accomplished woman of the world. She has that frivolous taste for the arts which gives a grace to luxury and communicates to beauty a charm that gives it an unlimited power over refined minds. Moreover, to a jaunty manner and a bad tone which is entirely modern and of the latest type, she unites the instinct of a savage, the cunning of a Red Indian, which makes women so formidable; I mean real women, those who know how to use their beauty. For the rest, her mind is commonplace; she feels nothing that is truly great; she is a busy, frivolous, empty person, always boring herself.

She is a widow. Her father helps her to give dinners and to hold evening receptions which are mentioned in the newspapers. The father, too, is very modern. He does not claim exaggerated respect from his daughter, whom he loves as an expert, a judge of women, with just a trace of jealousy and sensuality. Doubtless a very polite and agreeable person, but pushing the dilettantism of paternity rather far.

Madame de Burne receives, in her house in the Rue du Général-Foy, musicians, novelists, painters, diplomatists, rich people, in short the ordinary frequenters of a fashionable drawing-room. As we know, men of talent are to-day very well received in society when they are celebrated. As one advances in life one perceives that the rarest courage is that of thinking. Society thinks itself sufficiently bold if it supports established reputations. Madame de Burne has a writer of naturalist novels whose books sell to the tune of several thousands, and a musician who, in accordance with custom, has produced an opera first in Brussels, then in Paris.

A hundred years ago she might have had a parrot and a philosopher.

Her drawing-room is highly distinguished; very select, the newspapers would say. Madame de Burne, who adores being adored, has turned the head of all her intimates. They have all been through their crisis. She has kept them all, no doubt because she has never preferred any one of them to the rest. But a new-comer, M. André Mariolle, who loves her in his turn, and tells her so, succeeds in inspiring her with the idea that it is perhaps good to love. She gives herself to him, without beating about the bush, generously. She has courage, this little woman; but she was not made for love. M. André Mariolle very soon discovers that as a lover she is unpardonably inattentive. He suffers, for he loves her profoundly and wants the whole of her. After a year's trial, wearied, irritated, despairing, for when with him she is always absent or evasive, he breaks with her, makes good his escape and goes into hiding. But he does not go very far; only to Fontainebleau, where he finds a little maidservant at an inn who suddenly proves to him that not all women in love display the indifference of Madame de Burne. That is the story. It is a cruel story, but that is not my fault. Some of my readers, and they are not those whose sympathy is least dear to me, complain at times, I know, with a sweetness of temper that touches me, that I do not sufficiently edify them, and that I no longer say anything to console the afflicted, edify the faithful and save the sinner.

They must not hold me too far responsible for all the bitter and painful things that I am obliged to show them. There is a strange acridity in contemporary thought. Our literature no longer believes

in the goodness of things. If we listen to a dreamer like Loti, an intellectual like Bourget, a sensualist like Maupassant, we hear in different accents the same words of disillusion. We are no longer shown a Mandane or a Clelia triumphant by virtue over weaknesses of the soul and the senses. The art of the seventeenth century believed in virtue, at all events before Racine, who was the most daring, the most terrible and the most truthful of naturalists, and perhaps in certain respects the least moral. The art of the eighteenth century believed in reason. The art of the nineteenth century believed first of all in passion, with Chateaubriand, George Sand and the romantics. Now, with the naturalists, it believes only in instinct.

It is on the inevitabilities of nature, on universal determinism, that our most powerful writers of novels base their morality and unfold their dramas. I can discover scarcely one among them, unless it is M. Alphonse Daudet, who seems now and again to admit a sort of universal providence, a categorical imperative, which his friend Gambetta somewhat radically called the immanent justice of things. The rest are pure sensualists, infinitely dejected, with that profound Epicurean melancholy beside which the affliction of the believer seems almost joy. This is a fact, and I must relate it just as the monk, Raoul Glaber, noted in his chronicle the pestilences and the famines of his terrifying century.

M. de Maupassant at least has never flattered us. He has never scrupled to assault our optimism, to mangle our dream of the ideal. And he has always done it so frankly, so honestly, with such simplicity of heart, and so firmly, that one is not over-resentful about it. And then he does not reason; he is

neither subtle nor irritating. In short, his talent is so potent, his hand so sure, and his audacity so fine that we are fain to let him do and say what he will. Intentionally or not, he has depicted himself in one of the characters of his last novel. It is impossible not to recognize the author of *Bel Ami* in the Gaston de Lamarthe of whom we are told that he was "endowed with two very simple senses, a clear eye for form and an instinctive intuition of what lies beneath." And as for the portrait of this Gaston de Lamarthe, is it not feature for feature the portrait of M. de Maupassant?

> "Gaston de Lamarthe was before all a man of letters, a pitiless and terrible man of letters. Equipped with an eye that collected images, attitudes, gestures with the rapidity and accuracy of a photographic camera, and endowed with penetration, with the sense of the born novelist, keen as the scent of a hound, he stored up professional data; from morning to night he was busy storing away professional data."

But for all this, is Michèle de Burne all that he meant her to be? Is she the type of the woman of to-day? I confess that I should be interested to know. I see plainly that she is modern as regards her *bibelots* and her frocks and the little clock in her carriage, although the heroine of M. Bourget's parallel romance was careful to obtain hers from England. I see that she gets her clothes from D——, like the actresses of the Gymnase and the wives of the great financiers, and I should not dare to cavil at that girdle of carnations, that wreath of forget-me-nots and lilies of the valley, and those three orchids emerging from the bosom, which, between you and me, seem to me more like the dream of a South American parrot than the device of a woman born on the banks of the Seine "in the true

land of glory." But these are infinitely delicate subjects, to me far more difficult than the colour and the texture of the style. I see—and this is a great point! —that by these "feather-trimmed" robes whose prisoner she was, by these "jealous wardresses, these costly and coquettish barriers" which she wears even in the little pavilion where she meets her lover, Madame de Burne reminds us of Gyp's Paulette and that Madame d'Houbly whose gown was fastened by sixty frogs, over which as many loops were slipped, without reckoning hooks and eyes and a row of buttons. And I feel persuaded that Madame de Burne is very modern and completely alienated from nature. She is modern also, it seems, in the twist of her mind, the expression of her face, and in those indefinable nothings which are everything.

I believe, I want to believe that she is a modern woman like all other modern women; and—let it be said—those all are very few. She is the modern woman such as leisure, idleness and satiety have made her. And this woman is so rare that we may say that numerically she does not count, although we see, so to speak, no one else, for she shines on the surface of society like a light silvery froth. She is the glittering fringe on the brink of the deep human tide. Her futile, necessary function is to show herself. It is for her that the innumerable industries are practised whose products are, as it were, the flower of human toil. It is to adorn her delicate beauty that thousands of workers weave precious fabrics, chisel gold and cut gems. She serves society without intending it, without knowing it, by virtue of that wonderful solidarity which unites all human beings. She is a work of art, and for that reason she deserves the heartfelt respect of all who love

form and poetry. But she is a thing apart; her morals are peculiar to herself and have nothing in common with the simpler and more stable morals of that human multitude which is dedicated to the august and strenuous task of gaining its daily bread. It is here, in this laborious mass, that the true morality is to be found, the real virtues and vices of a people.

As for Madame de Burne, whose function is to be elegant, she accomplishes her social task by wearing beautiful dresses. Let us not ask more of her. It was highly imprudent of M. de Mariolle to love her with all his heart, to demand that a person who owed herself to her own beauty should renounce herself in order to be wholly his. He suffered for it cruelly. And the little servant at Fontainebleau did not console him. If he wishes to be consoled I advise him to read the *Imitation*. It is a helpful book. M. Cherbuliez (so he told me one day) believes it was written by a man who had known the world and who had loved. I think so too. One could not otherwise explain such thoughts as this, thoughts that make one shudder: "Oftentimes I could wish that I had held my peace, when I have spoken; and that I had not been in company." M. de Mariolle will not be disappointed; he will feel at once that this book also is a book about love. Let him open this breviary of human wisdom and he will find this precept:

"Trust not nor lean upon a reed full of wind; for that all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall wither as the flower of the field."

PAUL BOURGET

"UN CŒUR DE FEMME"

HIS is a small volume, one of those small yellow-covered volumes of which one sees so many in the book-sellers' windows; but this particular volume will find its way to all the sea-beaches, all the watering-places where those few thousands of subtle, restless and unprofitable souls that constitute Parisian society are dispersed in this cool, pallid summer weather. Among them there are a hundred, invested with the female form, with smiling faces and pretty dresses, on whom the fortune of the novelists depends. This little book bears on its cover the name of Paul Bourget, and is entitled *Un Cœur de Femme*. This is why it will travel to the celebrated springs in the mountains where the fair drinkers of the waters resort; this is why it will be found on the beach of the fashionable sea-side. "The fashionable sea-side"; the phrase is M. Bourget's own.

One of the gentlemen of Shakespeare's comedies, who is a bibliophile and a gallant, as becomes a noble courtier of the days of Queen Elizabeth, says, in speaking of the books which should find a place in his library: "I will have them well bound and they must speak of love." All the more as it was then the fashion in England and in France to clothe books in a magnificent envelope. The binders still

made those bindings, divided into panels filled with ornament and devices in the taste of the Renaissance, which protected the book while they did it honour, like a casket of gilded leather.

To-day, like the gentleman in the comedy, we want our favourite books, our novels, to speak of love. And this is assuredly the great point for women. But no one cares whether they are well bound, nor even whether they are bound in any fashion whatever.

The yellow cover fades and grows dog's-eared; the back breaks, and no one takes the least heed of it. And why should anyone take the least heed of it? No one will re-read it or think of re-reading it. This is one of the misfortunes of contemporary literature. Nothing is left of it. Books—even the most pleasing—do not last. The fashionable readers who believe themselves to be of a literary turn of mind have no library. It is enough for them that the "novelties" enter their homes. "Novelties" is the word in use in the booksellers' shops on the boulevards. Only the bibliophiles possess libraries nowadays, and, as we know, people of this species never read. A novel by Maupassant or Loti is a breakfast in spring or winter: novels have their day, like flowers. I am quite aware that here and there something of them remains; the reader must not take what I say quite literally. But it is only too true that the novel-reading public is becoming more and more impatient, frivolous and forgetful. This is because it is feminine. If we except M. Zola, our fashionable novelists have infinitely more female than male readers.

And it is to the women that we owe the spirit and the manner of the contemporary novel, for it may

truly be said that a literature is the work of the public as well as of the authors. Only madmen speak when they are quite alone: and to write all alone is a species of monomania; I mean to write for oneself and without any hope of moving the minds of others. So it is quite natural that our novelists should almost all have sought without intending it and sometimes without knowing it "to please the ladies." M. de Maupassant has done it, with a little effort perhaps, but with complete success. His last works, *Plus fort que la mort* and *Notre cœur,* have been drawing-room successes.

They are for that matter very fine novels in which the master has retained all his frankness and even all his coarseness. But the subject was one to please him. This precious secret of reaching the feminine heart is one that M. Paul Bourget solved at once and as it were naturally. From the very first he had practised those analyses of feelings, that metaphysic of love, which is the great attraction, the invincible charm. It is hardly possible to depart from it without running the risk that the most beautiful eyes in the world may avert themselves in boredom from the page commenced. Women never look for anything in a novel but their own secret and that of their rivals. A drawing-room is always a kind of Court of Love; there are Decamerons and Heptamerons on all the fashionable sea-fronts and all the inland watering-places. Our cultivated Parisian women delight, as did the Signora Pampinæa of whom Bocaccio tells us, in dissertations upon the singular examples of the tender feelings.

When I speak of Courts of Love and of Decamerons, when I speak of ladies who indulge in dissertations, my remarks must be understood in the

most familiar sense. The fashionable mind has assumed a careless and easy attitude, and the dissertation of the Signora Pampinæa quickly turns to scandal. But the foundation is the same: to-day, as formerly, women like to "talk round" their secret. The story-teller, when he is M. Paul Bourget or M. Guy de Maupassant, renders them a great service by giving them an opportunity to confess themselves under fictitious names; confession is an imperative need of the soul. Father Monsabré has justly said as much in one of his sermons at Notre-Dame. How happily inspired is M. Bourget when he depicts a Madame de Moraine or a Madame de Tillières of whom all the women will apparently be speaking, while in reality under these names of Moraine or Tillières they are speaking of themselves and their friends! What a hubbub of clear, charming voices, what involuntary avowals and mischievous allusions are evoked during the hour of afternoon tea and behind the flowers at dinner by every fresh novel of M. Bourget's! This time, assuredly, with the heroine of *Un Cœur de Femme* and Madame de Tillières, they will have a fine opportunity of making veiled confidences and secret allusions. Theirs must seem an admirable case to the fair theologians of passion, the learned casuists of love. Only to think that this gentle Madame de Tillières, this pale, refined, slender Juliette, this delicate, pure, proud creature, has two lovers at the same time—one she has had for ten years, and the other for a couple of hours! How can such a thing be? I hardly know how to tell you. It needs a subtle scholar like M. Paul Bourget to solve such moral and physiological difficulties. No, really, I could not tell you.

But there it is. Madame de Tillières set foot in the labyrinth; and she has lost her way. She was more romantic than amorous, tender rather than passionate. It was pity that was her undoing. The Catholic priests, who have acquired such a sure knowledge of the human heart, are right in saying that pity is a dangerous sentiment. We read in M. Nicole, who was nevertheless a great man, that pity is the source of concupiscence. There we have a very great truth expressed in very ugly language. Madame de Tillières gives herself for the first time through pity, without love. This was the sin of Eloa—a noble fault, no doubt, but for ever inexpiable. You know that Eloa was an angel, a beautiful angel, for there are feminine angels, or at least the poets tell us so. Eloa had pity upon the Devil; she descended into Hell to console him who was the most beautiful of creatures and is the most miserable, Satan; and she was for ever lost to Heaven. Still, one feels that there was unconscious love in the pity of the celestial Eloa. Madame de Tillières' mistake was more profound, for she gave herself out of pure pity, without real love. It was the sin of sweetness and kindliness, but it was none the less a sin. She was justly punished for it; she loved, no longer being free, and she did not know how to defend herself against this love, and thus a noble offence led her to one that was debasing. At all events, she did not forgive herself. Let the Almighty judge her after M. Paul Bourget. But I believe that she was, really, a beautiful character.

This is, you will agree, a real love-story, and one which may well be the subject of lengthy discussion.

The little that I have written is but a note on the margin of M. Bourget's novel. I have not even told you the names of Juliette's two lovers. The first was Poyanne, the second Casal. Poyanne suffered from domestic unhappiness; he had a great soul and a noble genius. It was to him that Madame de Tillières gave herself out of pity. Casal was a libertine; it was he that Madame de Tillières truly loved. And in this connection M. Bourget asks whence comes this power of seduction which professional libertines exercise over virtuous women, and why Elvira is attracted by Don Juan.

"Some," he says, "are inclined to see herein the feminine complement of that masculine folly which a misanthropic humorist has named 'redemptorism'—the desire to rescue courtesans by means of love. Others diagnose it as mere vanity. In causing a libertine to adore her, is not a virtuous woman proud of defeating innumerable rivals, and among them those whom her virtue renders especially hateful to her? Perhaps we shall have the key to this enigma if we admit that the heart is subject, so to speak, to a law of saturation. We have only a limited capacity for receiving impressions of a certain order. Once this capacity is exceeded we are powerless to admit further identical impressions and we feel an irresistible need of contrary impressions."

All this is true, or may be true. And woman, moreover, is sensitive to every kind of renown. Besides, the specialist has a great advantage over the ordinary man, and after all . . . what do we know? M. Bourget, who is a philosopher, and one of the ablest, has, here and there in this new book of his as in its predecessors, a clear insight into human

nature. I noted, in passing, this shrewd remark upon the friendship of women for women:

"That which distinguishes friendship between women from friendship between men is that the latter cannot exist without absolute confidence, while the former dispenses with it. A woman will never absolutely believe what her woman friend tells her, and this continual mutual suspicion does not prevent the friends from tenderly loving one another."

The admirable analyst, who has already so well defined jealousy, gives us once again some profound and subtle observations upon the subject.

Here, for example, is a remark which has never been made so plainly, that I know of, although our ancient humanity has assuredly never been without the opportunity of making it:

"When one loves," says M. Bourget, "the faintest indications provide material for the worst suspicions, and the most convincing proofs, or proofs that one would have thought convincing beforehand, leave a last foothold for hope. One regards anything in the way of misfortune as possible; one wishes to regard it as possible; and yet a secret voice pleads within us which murmurs: 'But what if you were mistaken!' Thus, when the evidence forces itself upon us, when it is indisputable, the heart receives a completely fresh shock, as though one had never suspected anything."

Reading these novels of fashionable love, *Flirt,* by M. Paul Hervieu, *Notre Cœur,* by M. de Maupassant, *Un Cœur de Femme* and certain others, we end by reflecting that love, the barbarous passion, has acquired, with civilization, the uniformity of a game whose rules the men and women of the social

world are careful to observe. It is a game full of difficulties and complications; an extremely graceful game. But it is always obscure, pitiless Nature that keeps the goal. And this is why no game is crueller or more immoral.

THE YOUTH OF M. DE BARANTE *

REMEMBER as a child having seen M. de Barante, then more than an octogenarian, on several occasions in my father's bookshop. We were eagerly reading his *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne* at college, and I regarded the author of that interesting narrative with all the bashfulness and awe proper to youthful admiration. But M. de Barante spoke so affectionately, and in so gentle a voice, that I was a little reassured. He was an excellent man, who loved to do good to those about him. He spent only a few days of every year in Paris, living in retirement on his estate of Barante in Auvergne, where he was born and where he wished to die. I was told, and I believe it, that he was surrounded there by the respect and sympathy of all.

The sight of him reminded one of the words of the poet:

"Rien ne trouble sa fin; c'est le soir d'un beau jour." †

I have never met a more agreeable old man. And I still behold with pleasure, among my oldest recollections, his gracious countenance, chiselled by the years like an old ivory carving of exquisite refinement.

As for the *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne,* I have not re-read it. But I have read Froissart. M. de Barante has written a great deal, and has even

* *Souvenirs du baron de Barante,* de l'Academie française, 1782–1866, published by his grandson, Claude de Barante, cr. 8vo, vol. I.

† Nothing troubles his end; it is the evening of a beautiful day.

written very well, but his historical and literary works are not much more than the distractions of a statesman and the amusement of a sage. No one reads the pages of the *Ducs de Bourgogne* to-day, although they are so easy to read and are imitated from the chronicles with a somewhat nerveless grace. His histories of the Convention and the Directory have never been much read. M. de Barante is more interesting than his writings, and the best of his works might well be that in which he depicts himself, that collection of his *Souvenirs,* of which M. Claude de Barante, his grandson, has just published the first volume.

Like the late Duc de Broglie, M. de Barante was nearing the close of his life when he undertook to write his memoirs, and death interrupted this last task. To accomplish it M. de Barante had to do little more than arrange the abundant notes which he had already set in place in his interleaved copies of Michaud's *Biographie* and Capefigue's *Europe sous le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration.* The reader will perhaps be surprised that M. de Barante should have chosen to annotate one of Capefigue's works. But owing to the amplitude of its design the book lent itself to rubrics dealing with many men and things, and people had not then the conception of history that obtains to-day, and Capefigue answered well enough. M. Claude de Barante rightly considered that he might continue the interrupted work by making use of the prepared material and the letters which he was able to collect. The first volume, which has just appeared, ranges from 1782, the date of M. de Barante's birth, to the month of February, 1813. It presents a complete and continuous record.

Doubtless it was not to be expected that the letters which Madame Récamier wrote to M. de Barante about 1805, and which have been preserved, should be found in this volume. No doubt there were reasons why they should not at once be published. They are in safe hands, but are not always so faithfully guarded that it has been impossible, privately, to get sight of a few lines of them. I may say that they are prettily worded and are more tender and more feminine than one would have supposed. Sainte-Beuve used to say that Madame Récamier, lacking style and wit, had the prudence only to write brief notes. That clever man, who knew everything, was not, however, acquainted with the letters of which I am speaking. They have grace, delicacy, and almost ardour. It was at Madame de Staël's, at Coppet and in Geneva, when his father was prefect, that young Barante saw Madame Récamier for the first time. He speaks briefly, in his *Souvenirs,* of these visits to Corinne. "I was twenty-one years of age," he says; "I was greatly attracted by this Coppet circle, where it seemed to me that they had some regard for me." Corinne was then at the height of her glory, in the full radiance of her beauty, the beauty of eloquence, passion and temperament. It is said that she had a liking for young Barante, who was a pleasant youth; it is also said that she collaborated in the *Tableau de la Littérature au XVIII^e^ Siècle,* which the author published a little later. The *Souvenirs* throw no light upon this point. They tell us only that M. de Barante was one of the little company of actors at Coppet. For they acted tragedies at Coppet, as formerly at Ferney. M. de Barante was given a part in Voltaire's *Mahomet,* when he played beside

Benjamin Constant, who appeared as Zopire. We are not told whether Madame Récamier was acting on this occasion. We know from another source that she played Aricie in a performance of *Phèdre,* in which Madame de Staël took the principal part. Madame Récamier is not once named in M. de Barante's *Souvenirs*. Yet after one of these visits to Coppet she wrote to him that she had for a long time followed with her eyes the carriage that bore him away, and she advised him not to say too many nice things about her to Madame de Staël when he was writing to her. But these are letters which ought to be read in their entirety; M. de Barante had kept them, and they were such that he could keep them. He had even kept the little scrap of paper that Madame Récamier slipped into his hand one evening at her house in Paris, on which she had pencilled some such sentence as this: "Go out, hide under the stairs and come up again when Molé has gone." Doubtless this meant nothing and the note might be explained in a number of ways. At the same time we have been told overmuch of Madame de Récamier's saintly virtue, and it amuses us now to surprise her manœuvre. These letters if they are published, and they will be published, will not betray Julie's secret. A doubt will remain. But we know at least that the divine Julie was not so insensible as she has been reputed to be. We know that she confessed her real or pretended weakness for a very young man, younger than herself by five years. And she will no longer be quite the Madame Récamier whom Jules de Goncourt so prettily calls "Our Lady of Conversation."

All the evidence agrees in recognizing that M. de Barante was extremely fascinating in his youth. It

is said that the charm of a man is always the gift of his mother, and that the sons of superior women may be recognized by their grace. I will not swear to it, but it certainly seems that Prosper de Barante's mother must have been one of the elect. As her son reveals her to us she is admirable, as regards both her mind and her heart. She wrote, for her children, epitomes of history, geography lessons in dialogue, and tales. When, under the Terror, her husband, once the criminal lieutenant at Riom, was arrested and taken to Thiers, she went to join him, on horseback, although she was at the end of her pregnancy, and she was brought to bed on the following day. Scarcely recovered from lying-in, she hastened to Paris and solicited the Committee of Public Safety for her husband's liberty, and obtained it, against all probability. She was still young when in 1801 a fatal malady struck her down. "My mother," says M. de Barante, "felt death approaching, without illusion and with courage, in the full possession of her reason. Her soul revealed itself, sustained by the memories of the noblest and purest life. She expressed herself to all in a language at once so lofty and so natural that those who surrounded her were filled with respect and admiration."

Prosper de Barante was entering public life when he lost his mother. This incomparable misfortune left a profound and lasting imprint upon his mind.

"It seems to me," he says, "that such moral and religious ideas, such lofty feelings as I may have, date from this moment. I learned to value things better than before; my conscience became stricter and more enlightened."

This is a frame of mind which all who have passed through a similar experience will understand. M. de

Barante adds that he read and re-read, at that time, a book which his father loved above all others, the *Pensées* of Pascal, and that this book left "a great deal of substance" in his mind. I should like to believe it, but there is little evidence of it and one would not have suspected, if M. Barante had not said so, that he was reared upon Pascal. If the criminal lieutenant of Riom, who was something of a Jansenist, was indeed a great reader of the work of his great compatriot, perhaps his relative, for everybody is related in Auvergne, nothing could have been more natural. But that Prosper de Barante should owe anything to the most fiery, most gloomy, most ardent and most pitiless of Catholics is a thing that does not "jump to the eyes," and I have searched in vain to detect anything in the moderation of this politic man to recall the inhumanity of the author of the *Provinciales*.

Wise, perspicacious, diligent; such Prosper de Barante shows himself from the first. On leaving the *École polytechnique* he was appointed a junior member of the Council of State in 1806, at the age of twenty-three. At once he felt that he was launched:

"This favour rejoiced me greatly. I should have a position in the political world, a regular occupation, and the hope of succeeding in it. But what presently gave me more satisfaction was the fact that I was so placed that I should see and hear the Emperor.

"I did not assuredly share in the fetichism of those about him, but to know and appreciate so great a mind, so powerful a character, to know what he was and what he was not, absorbed my attention. I regarded the sessions of the Council as a sort of drama, and I listened with interest to the speakers, and above all to the Emperor."

And he records all the sayings of the Emperor, who expressed himself vigorously, sharply, impa-

tiently, passing from raillery to anger, and swearing when M. Beugnot did not share his view. It is not that Napoleon was incapable of enduring contradiction, but he could only suffer it from those whom he knew were not too obstinate.

It is in the preparation of the educational legislation that he speaks most abundantly. His ideas are as comprehensive as the subject with which they are concerned. But he finds that public education is never sufficiently in the hands of the Government.

The sessions were interesting. Unfortunately the young councillor was not able to be present at them for very long. The Emperor entrusted him with despatches for Spain. Charles IV (the text says Charles II) was then at San Ildefonso, the Versailles of the Catholic kings. M. de Barante was received by that Godoy to whom Marie-Louise of Parma had given, with her love, the title of Prince of the Peace and the royal power. When he spoke to the Queen "the tone of his voice was by no means respectful," remarks M. de Barante, "and I saw that he wished to prove to me to what point he was the master."

A little while after this, the French Army having entered Berlin, he received the order to repair thither. He met M. Daru on leaving the Botanical Gardens.

"I have just committed an act of vandalism," the intendant of the armies informed him; "I have been to see if there was any way of arranging the orange-houses and the glass-houses as stables. Can you guess the thought that pursued me? I thought to myself that the armies of Europe might equally well invade France and enter Paris, and that then the military intendant, seeing the gallery of the Museum, would reflect that it would make a mag-

nificent hospital and would proceed to calculate how many beds one could instal there."

M. de Barante heard these words as an echo of his own thought. He did not believe in the duration of the Empire and he was serving it as a master whose time is almost up.

Appointed sub-prefect of Bressuire in 1807, he found a little town half buried in ivy and nettles: a true nest of Chouans. But these ex-brigands were very worthy fellows, who were forgetting war for the chase, and after dinner they were wont to sing songs and dance in a circle. A population easy enough to manage, above all for such a moderate and scrupulous functionary as M. de Barante. The only serious difficulties arose out of the conscription. This proceeding was by no means agreeable to the young men of Le Bocage. Napoleon, therefore, who feared a new "Chouannerie," demanded only a very greatly reduced contingent from the western departments. Further, he granted great facilities for substitution. He recommended his officials to employ all possible circumspection, and M. de Barante's character was such that it was easy for him to follow such instructions. The Director-General of conscription was at that time a M. de Cessac, who, being a methodical man addicted to classification, had drawn up a list of prefects divided into four categories: (1) those who made efforts and were successful; (2) those who made efforts and were not successful; (3) those who were successful without efforts; and (4) those who were not successful and made no efforts. M. de Barante does not say in which category he was placed by M. de Cessac.

M. de la Rochejacquelein and his wife, the widow

of the heroic Lescure, were living in the Château de Clisson, near Bressuire. The young sub-prefect often saw them and sometimes spent a few days at their house. There he met Madame de Donissan, who had been a lady-in-waiting to Madame Victoire. This was, for an official of the Empire, a very royalistic circle. But the sub-prefect was not himself very greatly attached to the régime which he was serving honestly and without enthusiasm. People did not scruple to announce the coming downfall in his presence.

One evening he replied:

"I believe, with you, that the Emperor is destined to ruin himself; he is intoxicated by his victories and the continuance of his successes. A day will come when he will attempt the impossible. Then you will see the Bourbons once again. But they will make so many mistakes, they know so little of France, that they will bring about a fresh revolution."

He thus foresaw, long before it came, the three days' revolution of July.

In 1807 Madame de la Rochejacquelein had just begun her memoirs; she read to M. de Barante what she had already written, as far as the crossing of the Loire, and proposed that he should "finish and even re-write in better style the first chapters."

He set to work immediately: Madame de la Rochejacquelein dictated what she had not already written. The book, published in 1815, is admirable in its truth and vitality. M. Claude de Barante insists, in a long note, upon attributing it to his grandfather.

If it is M. de Barante's work, it is his best book. But we cannot expropriate the widow of M. de Lescure. Does the edition of 1889 prove that it

was really his? And was there any need of proofs derived from an examination of the manuscripts? This book is made up of the sorrows, the sufferings, the perils and misfortunes of this warm-hearted woman. It is herself; it is what she has seen, what she has suffered. I am well aware that M. de Barante has retouched it, re-written it if you will, as the old editions inform us, and that he has added some topographical chapters. This is neither disputed nor disputable.

Yes, he made extensive corrections, but all his corrections were not happy ones, and the editors of 1889 have shown us that in more than one place M. de Barante spoiled the original text.

It is to be regretted that M. Claude de Barante has reopened a discussion which one thought was closed. It seems to me that the question was settled ten years ago in favour of Madame de la Rochejacquelein by the scholars of the departments of the Ouest sitting in committee under the presidency of M. Pie, bishop of Poitiers.

At the age of twenty-six M. de Barante was appointed prefect of La Vendée. He displayed in his new office the same gracious and benevolent spirit of which he had given proof at Bressuire, but he believed less and less in the duration of the Empire. As prefect he was present at the Emperor's marriage:

"It was truly a splendid ceremony. Nothing could have been more magnificent than this long procession of the Imperial Court, these kings and queens forming the Emperor's retinue, these great personages, these marshals covered with gold, with the stars and sashes of orders, passing through the gallery of the Musée on their way to the great square salon of the Louvre arranged as a chapel, between two hedges of spectators, men and women, wearing uniform, or decked out in their embroidered finery."

When the Emperor, the Empress and their train had passed, M. Mounier said to M. de Barante:

"All that won't prevent us from going one of these days to Bessarabia to die."

M. Mounier knew whom he was speaking to.

This first volume reveals M. de Barante as a man of great tact, judgment and delicacy; a man of the second class, but by no means without originality. He was an amiable Jansenist.

MYSTICISM AND SCIENCE

Dic nobis, Maria. . . .

AM only a dreamer, and, no doubt, I perceive human affairs only in the half-slumber of meditation; but it seems to me that the present season, the equinox of Spring, is a period of conciliation and sympathy, during which it is fitting to speak words of hope and friendship. And what makes me think so? I will tell you: it is the custom of giving Easter-eggs, which, dating from an age immemorial and going back, without a doubt, to the primitive civilizations, has been preserved down to our days among the Christian peoples. This long tradition, which attests the conservative spirit of societies, also shows how well things can be reconciled which apparently are irreconcilable.

We must give ear to the lessons of the almanack. At that moment of the year which we passed a few days ago the mysteries of Nature and the mysteries of religion are mingled in magnificent scenes of enchantment; spirit and matter vie with each other to celebrate the eternal resurrection; the woods and the sanctuaries blossom together. The Church sings: *"Dic nobis, Maria* . . . Tell us, Mary, whom thou hast seen upon the way?—I have seen the shroud and the vestments, the angelic witnesses, and the glory of the Re-arisen." And these charming words express, with the same potency, the return

of Spring and the victory of Christ. They associate, in an image of passion and splendour, the eternal Adonis and the God of the new age. While from the nave these joyous words mount up with the incense: "Tell us, Mary, whom thou hast seen upon the way?" the birds that make their nest in the old belfry reply with their song: "Mary, Mary, on thy way thou sawest the first rays of the sun mingling with the gentle rain, like a smile seen through tears, transforming itself into leaf and flower. And the light, too, changes into love when it shines into our hearts. This is why, seized with an eager desire to build nests, we are carrying pieces of straw in our beaks. Yes, the fruitful warmth becomes metamorphosed into desire. This is a great proof of the unity of the composition of the universe. M. Berthelot, who is a chemist, is beginning to suspect these things, which the old alchemists divined before him. But how, from this unity, does divinity proceed? That passes the understanding of the chemists, as it does that of the birds.

"This, this is what Mary has seen upon the way. She has seen the glory of the Re-arisen, that dies and is re-born with every year. It will be born again long after we are but a pinch of drifting dust; but it will not be re-born for ever, since it is no more (being wholly sun) than a spark of fire lost in infinite space. And what are we, the birds? Nothing: and a world. We love, we brood upon our eggs, we feed our nestlings. We are a fragment of the universal life. And all that is in the universe is useful, unless all is illusion and vanity; these two ideas are equally philosophical. But the birds believe that the birds are necessary and they act accordingly."

That is the dialogue between the organ and the birds as I heard it passing a village church on Easter morning. It seemed to me that it was full of religion.

In all lands and in all ages the Spring solstice has thus mingled, in joyful celebration, the hopes of the mystic and the rejoicings of Nature. Christianity has not freed itself, in its Easter celebrations, from the gentle paganism that embraces it, in the depth of the countryside, as the ivy and the brambles embrace a stone crucifix.

M. Camille Flammarion told me one day that in Bassigny, his native district, the peasants still celebrate the coming of Spring, as in the days of Joan of Arc, by associating with the ceremonies of Catholic worship more ancient rites that bear witness to a simple naturalism. And everywhere the meeting between Mary and the mysterious gardener becomes the symbol of the joys of earth as well as that of celestial hopes. *"Dic nobis, Maria . . .* Tell us, Mary, whom hast thou seen upon the way?" I found it the other day, this liturgical phrase, in a review of literature and art, at the beginning of one of those essays in moral criticism that reveal the mysticism of the new generation. "Mary, whom hast thou seen upon the way?" anxiously repeated M. Paul Desjardins that Easter day, as he began to write of one of the masters of whom youth has great hopes.*

And these pages, whose accent is so pure, whose feeling so generous, bear witness to a disquietude so great that I myself was a little perturbed by it. Here the *Dic nobis, Maria,* becomes the device of a confused palingenesia, a vague religion, an inexpressible

* The Vicomte Eugène Melchior de Vogué.

sense of something better about to be born. This article of M. Desjardins' is a sign, amid a thousand others, of the uneasiness of the new spirit.

All this is as yet very confused. But it is important to follow this new movement; it must be followed with solicitude and with the benevolent humour that fills us at the moment of writing these lines. We shall strive to discern the direction which these young minds are taking. It is for the strongest and the wisest of us to endeavour to lead and enlighten those who are to-day entering upon the intellectual life. For my part, I have no further ambition than to disentangle myself, to pick my way among these vague novelties. This I ought to do and must do, since I am a writer; which is a terrible thing when one comes to think of it.

The thing most evident is that the confidence in science which we used to feel so strongly is more than half lost. We were persuaded that with good experimental methods and careful observations we should succeed before long in creating universal rationalism. And we were not far from believing that a new era dated from the eighteenth century. I still believe this. But we must admit that matters are not progressing as rapidly as we thought and that the affair is not as simple as it seemed. M. Ernest Renan, our master, who more than anyone believed and hoped in science, himself confesses, without renouncing his faith, that there was some illusion in the thought that a society could be wholly based to-day upon rationalism and experience.

Our modern youth is seeking for something other than this. And since the science which we adduced as the supreme revelation is rejected it is important that we should know why it is rejected.

It is reproached in the first place with its insufficiency. Science, we are told, is not established; you have constructed sciences, which is a very different thing. And what, if you please, are these sciences, as you call them? Spectacles, neither more nor less. Spectacles! They give you a more penetrating sight and enable you to examine certain phenomena more accurately. Agreed! But does this signify very greatly? When you have observed a few more mirages in the gulf of appearances which is the perceptible universe, do you know any better what is the reason of things, what are the laws of the world which it is of importance to understand? And do you think that your discoveries in physiology and chemistry have put you on the track of a single moral truth?

Your science cannot aspire to govern us because it is in itself without morality and the principles of action which we might derive from it would be immoral.

It is inhuman; its cruelty wounds us; it annihilates us in Nature; it compares us with the animals and plants by showing us what they have in common with us, that is to say, everything: their organs, their joy, their suffering and even their thought. It shows us lost with them upon a grain of sand, and it insolently proclaims that the destinies of the whole of humanity are, in the universe, nothing appreciable.

In vain we cry that we discover the infinite within ourselves. Science teaches us that the earth is not even a corpuscle in that vein of Uranus which we call the Milky Way; it makes us blush with shame and confusion at the memory of the time when we thought ourselves the centre of the world and the

fairest work of God, we who in reality spin awkwardly round a second-rate star a million times smaller than Sirius.

Our imperceptible corner of the universe seems poor enough as far as we can judge it. It has only one sun, whereas plenty of systems have two or three. Its central star can have little brilliance seen from the nearest systems. It is reddish, which is a sign that it is no longer burning with the energy of the young, perfectly white stars; presently, in a few millions of centuries only, it will show merely a smoky disk, spotted with great black scoriæ; and that will be the end, and the speck of dust which we call the Earth and which will then bear no name will roll on with it into the eternal night.

Humanity, no doubt, will have perished long before that epoch. In the meantime they tell us that we are travelling towards the constellation of Hercules; our dust will arrive there one day in darkness and silence: and this is all that science can reveal to us of the destiny of humanity.

We are making the journey in company with a few planets of which some are lost for us in the light of the sun—like Venus and Mercury—and the rest in the night of space, like Uranus and Neptune. The astronomers believe that it has been observed that Venus presents always one face to the sun. But they are not yet quite sure. The only planet whose surface we have been able to observe is Mars, our neighbour; continents have been distinguished upon it, seas, clouds, and snow at the pole; and M. Flammarion has drawn a map of it. Signor Schiaparelli saw canals upon it last year. These canals are dug as though by magic, and if they are the work of Martian industry we must admit that

the engineers of this planet are infinitely superior to ours. But it is not known that these are canals, and it seems that this world must be shifting and more disturbed than the face of the earth. Its countenance changes hourly. It is infinitely probable that it is inhabited; but we shall never know what forms life assumes there. It is also probable that life is as painful there as on the earth; we are free to believe it, and this at least is a consolation of which science will not deprive us. And as for man himself, what has science made of him? It has deprived him of all the virtues that constituted his pride and his beauty. It has taught him that all within him as all around him is determined by inevitable laws; that the will is an illusion and that he is only a machine ignorant of his own mechanism. It has suppressed even the sense of his identity, on which he founded such proud hopes. It has shown him two distinct existences, two souls in the same individual.

Thus the new generation draws up the indictment of science and declares it deprived of the right of ruling humanity.

What does it seek to put in the place of positive knowledge? It is this that we have to discover.

CÆSAR BORGIA *

HERE had to be Borgias, so that one might know all that the human beast is capable of when it is powerful and unfettered. These Romanized Spaniards were not, as far as we know, born with different hearts, with different minds from those possessed by ordinary folk. Their long-continued habit of crime has not entirely uprooted them from humanity; they still hold on to it by bleeding fibres. In them the natural feelings break forth with violence. Pope Alexander has the bowels of a father: before the corpse of his first-born he weeps like a child and prays like a woman. His daughter Lucrezia is capable of attachment and sheds heartfelt tears at the memory of her second husband and her brother. And if the most unnatural of the Borgias, Cæsar, had not in all his life a spark of pity or of tenderness, he displayed in the conduct of war and the administration of conquered countries a spirit of order, wisdom and moderation that attests at least to a certain intellectual beauty. No, the Borgias were not monsters in the true sense of the word. Their moral character, apparently, was not tainted by any constitutional vice; they did not differ, in their ideas or feelings, from the Savelli, the Gætani or the Orsini with whom they were surrounded.

* *César Borgia,* sa vie, sa captivité, sa mort, d'après de nouveaux documents des dépôts des Romagnes, de Simancas et des Navarres, par Charles Yriarte, 2 vol. in 8vo.

They were violent creatures in the full possession of life. They desired everything, and in that they were men; they were able to do everything, and it was this that made them such frightful criminals. It would be dangerous to blind ourselves to the fact; human societies contain a great many Borgias; I mean, a great many people possessed by a furious lust to accumulate and enjoy.

Our society still contains a very large number of them. They are of commonplace temperament and fear the police. It is the effect of civilization gradually to sap the natural energies. But the human foundation does not change, and this foundation is harsh, egoistical, jealous, sensual, ferocious.

There is not in our Government departments a single poor office that does not witness, within its four green paper-covered walls, all the lusts and hatreds that were kindled in the Vatican under the Spanish papacy. But there the human beast is less vigorous, less eager, less proud; the royal tiger has become the domestic cat. At bottom it is the same affair: we have got to live, and that alone is a ferocious business.

Cæsar was still a youth when his father, the Cardinal Rodriguez Borgia, raised himself by simony to the pontifical throne. He was a hard, cunning old man, who retained an enormous capacity for lust and domination. In him instinct was wonderful, as in the beasts. His cynicism was magnificent. He placed beside him, in Peter's throne, that beautiful Julia Farnese whom the people of Rome, to match the blasphemy to the scandal, used to call the wife of Jesus Christ, *sposa del Cristo*. The men of the people used to say, pointing at Julia's brother, that Farnese whom Alexander had clad in the purple:

"There goes the *Cardinal della Gonella,* the petticoat Cardinal." The Roman laughed and let the world talk. In those days, in the humble as in the great, in the whole people, the unbridled flesh raged upon its way. This obese old pontiff was splendid in his lechery when, at the wedding of Lucrezia, he poured sweetmeats into the bodices of noble Roman ladies, or when, after supper, seated beside his daughter, he watched the dancing of naked courtesans, lit by the candles from the table placed upon the floor. However, the Tiber rolled its nightly burden of corpses seaward, and every day there was some one of whose death men learned as they heard of his illness. The Holy Father had certain means of ridding himself of his enemies. Apart from that he was a good Christian, for he never erred in the matter of faith and showed himself to be extremely desirous of enlarging the domain of St. Peter. But, to tell the truth, he loved nothing so well as his children; he loaded them with wealth and honours, even to the length of appointing his daughter Lucrezia keeper of the Papal seal, regent of the Vatican and governor of Spoleto.

At the age of fifteen Cæsar was Archbishop of Pampeluna; at seventeen Cardinal of Valenza. The ambassador of the Duke of Ferrara went to see him in his house in the Trastevere. After one of these visits he wrote in a despatch the following remarks:

"He was about to go out hunting; he was clothed in silk, his weapon at his side. A tiny circle barely reminded one of the tonsured priest. We proceeded together on horseback, conversing together. He is a person of great mental powers, highly superior, and of an exquisite character. His modesty is great." Contemporaries readily praised the mod-

esty of Cæsar and his sister Lucrezia. It remains to be known what they understood by modesty and whether this was not the graceful sobriety of gesture and speech.

If so, Cæsar deserved this praise. Although learned in the sacred and profane sciences, a theologian, a humanist and even a poet, he remained silent and taciturn. He was, say those who approached him, a very solitary and secret lord, *molto solitario e segreto*. A lover of sumptuous fabrics, cunningly wrought gems and sparkling jewels, he went magnificently clad, rolling between his fingers a golden ball containing perfumes, his head already full of those great designs which Machiavelli was presently to admire. Under a sky and in a period when it was a glory merely to be beautiful, Cæsar was of a dazzling beauty.

This race of Borgias, afflicted by obesity with the advance of age, was superb in the first flush of youth. This fair-haired, charming prince, *biondo e bello,* dreamed of doffing the purple which hampered him and girding on the sword. But the sword that he longed for, the sword of the Captain-General of the Papal militia, before which bowed the gonfalon of the Church, was held by the Pope's elder son, the Duke of Gandia, who would not permit it to be wrested from him.

At the age of twenty Cæsar committed his first crime, and this was a masterpiece of crime. The two brothers were dining at the house of Madonna Vanozza, their mother, close to San Pietro ai Vincoli. It was a dinner of farewell; they were both to leave Rome the following day; Cæsar to attend the coronation of the King of Naples, Gandia to receive the investiture of the new possessions which the

Pope had given him. It was fairly late at night when the party broke up. Cæsar on his mule and Gandia on his horse left together. They took the road to the Vatican and parted before the palace of Cardinal Sforza. There the Duke of Gandia took leave of his brother and turned aside into a narrow lane.

He never reached home. For two days the Pope had him searched for everywhere, but to no avail. On the third day three hundred lightermen were sent to drag the bed of the Tiber; one of them brought up in his net the body of the Duke of Gandia, pierced by nine wounds, with his throat cut. The father's sufferings were horrible and immoderate. This sensualist, his very entrails torn, never ceased his groaning and weeping. His pride and his joy were shattered. He begged forgiveness of God; however, he continued his investigation, anxious to know the truth, impatient for the light. Each day brought him some fresh indication. Eye-witnesses had seen the assassins holding the swaying corpse upon a horse, and casting it into the river. The guilty were about to be discovered. Then suddenly the Pope stopped the inquiry. He feared that he already knew too much. He no longer wished to learn who it was that had murdered his son. He did not wish to hear the name that all Rome was whispering.

"His Holiness," says a witness, "is no longer inquiring, and all those about him are of the same opinion—he must know the truth." Three weeks later Cæsar had returned to Rome. The Sacred College repaired to the Vatican, where the Pope was waiting, as usual, in order to give his pontifical blessing to the son whom he had not seen since the murder. Having reached the foot of the throne,

Cæsar bowed his head. His father opened his arms and silently kissed his forehead; he then descended from his throne. *Eo deosculato, descendit de solio.* When he set his lips to the forehead of this Cain, this unhappy father must surely have tasted the sum of human bitterness, and his silence was full of infinite grief. But he was a man of impulse, in whom all impressions, even the strongest, were fugitive. Soon he will forget the bleeding corpse that the Tiber rolled along its bed. Despite himself, he will admire this audacious son, who fears neither God nor man. He will recognize his own blood. He will free Cæsar from the purple which ill suits so audacious a person, and he will enrich him with the spoils of the victim. To Cæsar he will give the gonfalon of the Church. And when Cæsar has conquered the Romagna and restored to St. Peter the cities of his patrimony, the father's heart will tremble with joy and love. Three years later, at the news that his son is about to arrive, the Pope gives no further audiences, says a clerk of the ceremonies; he is feverish and restless; he weeps and laughs at the same time.

Do not these feelings bear witness to a terribly rude and simple humanity? Is it not so that we should expect a cave-man to behave?

In the matter of crimes Cæsar never committed a greater one than the assassination of Gandia. But his other murders—for example, that of Alfonso di Bisceglia, Lucrezia's second husband—bear the same character of practical utility. Cæsar always killed coldly, without imagination, from sheer self-interest. It would be impossible to impart more lucidity to crime. To all his undertakings he brought an inordinate spirit and superhuman ardour. This fair-

haired Cæsar, the gracious dancer who between two assaults directed symbolical ballets, was a Hercules.

On St. John's day, the 24th of June, in the year 1500, bull-fights were organized in Rome, behind the basilica of St. Peter, according to the fashion introduced since the time of Callixtus by the Aragonese. Cæsar, his face uncovered, went down into the arena and fought on foot, dressed simply in a doublet, with the short sword and the *muleta,* and with five successive passes he encountered five bulls, putting them all to death. He even slew the last with a single stroke of the sword, to the shouts of a delirious crowd.

At the celebration of the third marriage of Lucrezia Borgia on the 2nd of January, 1502, there were again bull-fights in the Piazza San Pietro. On this occasion Cæsar entered the arena on horseback. He saluted the spectators in the Spanish manner, and, rushing straight at the bull, attacked it with a lance. Then he appeared on foot in the midst of the *cuadrilla* of ten Spaniards.

It is imaginable that in his fiery existence he knew no greater joy than that of employing the inexhaustible strength of his muscles. He was continually seen to twist a bar of steel, to break a horseshoe or a new rope.

The historians show him at Cesena, after the conquest, surrounded by his comrades in arms and the companions of his pleasures, climbing every Sunday the hill on which the peasants assembled to try their strength and skill; and taking part, without being recognized, in the games in vogue among the sturdy and turbulent populace of the Romagna and requiring all the gentlemen with him to accept the challenge of these rustics.

He had a profound contempt for women. Having married Charlotte d'Albret, the daughter of the King of Navarre, he left her some days after his marriage and never found leisure to see her again. During one of his campaigns in the Romagna he saw the wife of one of his Venetian captains, found her comely and had her carried off. At Capua he kept the most beautiful women prisoners for himself. Those who entered his tent saw there a tall, beautiful girl without a name, without a story, a dumb favourite, says M. Yriarte, whom he took with him when campaigning. We do not now know the name of the mother of the two bastards whom he left behind him. In short, he never gave a thought to a woman. But because of a woman this strong man lost his health and his beauty in a day. At twenty-five years of age his face became suddenly covered with pustules and fiery blotches which he retained to the day of his death. His hollow eyes seemed venomous. From that time forward he was horrible.

We know how the death of Alexander VI ruined Cæsar's fortune and how, betrayed by Gonzalva di Cordova, the Duke of Romagna had to renounce all rights over the States which he had conquered. We know that for two years a prisoner of Ferdinand the Catholic, Cæsar succeeded in escaping from the castle of Medina del Campo and, having entered the service of the King of Navarre, his brother-in-law, rushed furiously upon his death at Viana. In his short life he astonished men less by the coldness of his scoundrelism than by the brilliance of his intellect. Machiavelli admired the man who made always for the effective truth of things.

"This lord," he says of the Duke of Romagna, "is splendid and magnificent, and, in the career of

arms, such is his audacity that the loftiest enterprises seem but little to him; when it is a question of acquiring glory and enlarging his States he knows neither rest nor fatigue nor danger. Scarcely has he arrived at any place but one learns of his departure. He understands the art of getting the most out of his soldiers. He has been able to assemble the best troops in Italy; and all these circumstances, combined with a magnificent fortune, make him a formidable and victorious captain."

There is no doubt that Cæsar Borgia was one of the ablest men of his time.

Irrefutable evidence reveals him as benignant to his people, careful not to overload them with taxes, and, when marching through the countryside at the head of his troops, liberal to all who came before him to ask favours, to solicit his generosity, to beg for the liberty of some imprisoned or exiled relative or some refractory soldier. Cæsar never repulsed them; while he showed himself pitiless to those guilty of peculation or extortion. In short, he was clever enough to show himself as just and human when it was advisable.

He had, with the blackest soul, a brilliant and comprehensive intellect. Shall we go so far as to say that he was a great genius? No, for after all he established nothing, and the demon that possessed him urged him furiously towards the destruction of his work and his life. Moreover, it is pleasant and consoling to say, with a certain optimistic historian, that creative power is always the heritage of moral greatness.

All the above is merely a series of notes upon M. Yriarte's book; and here and there, I may say, these notes follow the text very closely.

This book is as interesting as possible. It is evident that M. Yriarte took a great deal of pleasure in writing it. M. Yriarte is a great virtuoso. His history of Cæsar Borgia, which is as a whole extremely elaborate, contains some new portions. In this connection I would make special mention of the chapters on the captivity and death of his hero, as well as some pages referring to the sword which Cæsar had made in 1498, bearing this device: *Cum Numine Cesaris Omen*

JAMES DARMESTETER *

HAVE a great affection for the Collège de France, and that for several reasons. There men profess at once the most ancient sciences in the world and the newest. The instruction given there serves no purpose; therefore it has retained an incomparable nobility. It is absolutely free. Messieurs the readers and professors, as the placard says, treat of what they like and as they like. There M. Emile Deschanel speaks ingeniously of the romanticism of the classics and M. Brown-Séquart seeks means of overcoming old age.

This ancient institution has this amiable characteristic, that it is open to every sort of novelty. They teach everything there. I wish they would teach the rest. I should like someone to create a chair of telepathy for some pupil of Dr. Charles Richet's and a chair of socialism to which M. Malon should give his name. I would venture also to ask for a chair of physical astronomy, in order to study more closely the canals of the planet Mars, which perturb me greatly. It would be wise to discuss the matter amply before an astronomer discovers that they do not exist. I know of nothing more fascinating than the young sciences which have not yet emerged from the fables of childhood, and I should like the Collège de France to open its indulgent

* *Essais orientaux,* 1 vol. in 8vo. *Lettres sur l'Inde,* 1 vol. in 18. *La Légende divine,* 1 vol. in 18.

bosom to all of them. This establishment combines the old procedures and the new methods: one professor will still employ the methods of Rollin and our old Oratorians; and then another, like M. Gaston Paris or M. Louis Hervet, will display all the resources of modern scholarship. It is an Abbey of Thelema, in which everybody is free because everybody is discreet. Youth is allowed to be effervescent and age occasionally slumbers. They ought to be happy there. Every teacher has his hearers. One has youthful scholars for his audience; another has fashionable women; a third, a few chilly old men. And each of them has a beautiful white placard on the door of his house. M. Renan administers the Collège de France with a spirit of love and prudence and that faith in scientific things which inspires all his thoughts and all his actions. His indulgent solicitude maintains peace, independence and justice within its walls. He recalls those great abbots of the days of old, who, holding the crozier in one plump, white hand, displayed in the government of their monastery the mildest energy and concealed their zeal beneath their smiles.

The very walls of the Collège de France have a charm for me, an expression of silence and recollection. They are old, but not of profound antiquity. Their first foundations date from two centuries back. I have read in I know not what dry and dusty pamphlet the lamentations of Ramus, who complained that he was reduced to teaching in the street, so that his lessons, he said, were incessantly "importuned and disturbed by the passing of porters and washerwomen." But the walls of the Collège de France, which began to rise in the days of Louis XIII, have heard Gassendi, Guy Patin, Rollin,

Tournefort, Daubenton, Lalande, Vauquelin and Cuvier. And later they heard those of whom Michelet has said: "We were three strings in harmony: Quinet, Mickiewicz and I."

The best way of going to the Collège de France is by the Rue Saint-Jacques. It is ill-paved, narrow, tortuous; but it is noble and full of glory. For here, in the time of King Louis XI, were established the presses of the first Parisian printer. For three centuries this thoroughfare was honoured by illustrious and scholarly booksellers, and now, ruined and fallen into decay, it is still bordered by stalls on which old Greek and Latin texts are displayed. There, under a grey sky, in the damp half-light, on the greasy pavement, hustled by the traffic, the poor poet who loves books because books are dreams halts instinctively before the boxes of the second-hand bookseller. He opens a little penny classic, pitiable to look at, spotted with ink. He reads and presently he sees—O magic!—the forms of virgins passing in their white tunics. He sees Antigone beneath the sacred laurels. And with his feet in the mud he is off in pursuit of the host of charming and heroic shades.

I confess that long ago when I was of an age when one absorbs the poetry of Sophocles from the counters of the second-hand booksellers, I used to go to the Collège de France by this narrow, hilly, uneven, dirty and venerable Rue Saint-Jacques, where one acquires a contempt for unreal wealth and the certainty that the only enviable riches are those of the understanding. If I have taken the liberty of leading you to-day—by way of the Rue Saint-Jacques—to the old house which was founded by Francis I, it is that you may hear one of the

youngest and most highly esteemed professors of the Collège de France, M. James Darmesteter, who occupies the chair of the Iranian languages there. The name of Darmesteter is doubly dear to science. James's brother, Arsène, died young, but not without leaving behind him some important works upon the French language. He excelled in method, in the soundness of his views, in the constructive faculty. His book on the life of words—*La Vie des mots*—reveals a logic of the highest class. Arsène, in collaboration with the venerable M. Hatzfeld, compiled a French dictionary which I hope will soon be published, and which will be the first in which you will find the various senses of each word logically deriving one from another and explained by their very succession. He was the best, the simplest, the most laborious of men, and all those who have visited him in his modest house at Vaugirard can bear witness to the holy simplicity of his life. I can still see his grave, quiet artisan's face, his sober gesture, his air of proud humility and intelligent candour. I can still hear his speech, as clear, gentle and penetrating as his thoughts. His young brother, M. James Darmesteter, for whom he had a mother's eyes and heart, also gave cause for great hopes, based upon other qualities. More spontaneous, more rapid, full of sudden intuitions, James was admirable for the boldness and variety of his views. He had a profusion of general ideas, and one divined even then that his activities would absorb a wide province of science and poetry. He had neither the serenity nor the intellectual prudence of his younger brother. His breathless, brief, vivid mode of expression announced quite a different kind of genius; his feverish gaze betrayed the poet, and in truth he

is as much a poet as a scholar. I wish I could paint for you those black Arab eyes in the pale face with its accentuated features, which bears the traces of an extreme delicacy of temperament. I wish I could show you all the ardour, all the passion that exists within this fragile envelope. But at least you will find it all in his books, in his brilliant, broken style, in his eager, impassioned ideas, in his impetuous imagination.

James Darmesteter is a Jew. He has the face of a Jew, and the soul of a Jew; the obstinate, patient soul that has never surrendered. He is a Jew with a sort of fidelity which is still a sort of faith. To be sure, he is enfranchised from all positive religion. He has chosen mythology for his principal study, and he has applied himself to investigating the mechanism of languages and the mechanism of religions. He knows how the beliefs of Israel were elaborated. But in a certain sense he has retained his belief in the Bible of the Jews. Outside all confusions, above all dogmas, he is still attached to the spirit of the Scriptures. More, by an original turn of thought he has added the fairer parts of Christianity to Judaism, and, leading the Church to the Synagogue, he reconciles mother and daughter in an ideal Jerusalem. But it is the daughter, as is only right, who recognizes her offences and confesses her errors. He finds that Christianity contains a great deal of Judaism. And this is what he says in his *Essais orientaux:*

"In Christianity, all that comes in a direct line from Judaism lives and will live. The reign of the Bible and the Gospels, *in so far as they are inspired by the Bible,* can only be confirmed as the positive religions which are based upon them lose their

empire. The great religions outlive their altars and their priests; Hellenism, though abolished, has fewer unbelievers to-day than in the days of Socrates and Anaxagoras; the gods of Homer were dying when Phidias carved them in Parian marble; it is now that they truly reign as immortals, in the mind and heart of Europe. It matters not that the Cross crumbled into dust; a few words were spoken in its shadow in Galilee whose echo will vibrate to all eternity in the human conscience. And even though the people that wrote the Bible should vanish, race and cult, without leaving a visible trace of its passage upon the earth, its imprint would lie in the profoundest depths of the heart of generations who may, perhaps, know nothing of it, but who will live by what it has implanted in them. Humanity, as it is dreamed of by those who would wish to be called free-thinkers, may deny with its lips the Bible and its work; it cannot deny it with its heart without tearing out of itself that which is best in it—the faith in unity and the hope of justice—without retreating into the mythology and the right of might of three thousand years ago."

In reality, it is in the twilight of the gods that M. James Darmesteter reconciles the Messiah with the Jews who crucified Him. A pious atheism disposes him to all the reconciliations. His syncretism is all the wider in that it embraces pure ideas. He is right; when they no longer have any priests the gods become very easy to live with. This may be seen in the museums. And if M. Guimet's guests, on their bronze or ebony pedestals, exchange glances of irritation or surprise, they tolerate one another, and the dialogue of their venerable eyes will continue for ever in an august peace.

M. James Darmesteter has reconciled all the gods, Jesus among them, in the wonderful prose poems of his *La Légende divine*. He has revealed in them the various forms of the human conscience.

These pages, with their powerful rhythm and their profound thought, bear this dedication: *Mariæ sacrum*. It is permissible to recognize in this votive inscription the name of the poet-scholar's companion, for this name belongs to poetry and art.

Mary F. Robinson, to-day Madame Darmesteter, is an English poetess of exquisite refinement; her gracious hands have the art of assembling great and living images that envelop us and remain with us.

And this poetess is also an historian. Mary Robinson has said: "The sirens love the sea, and I the past." She loves the past, and she is writing at this moment a history of the Italian republics.

It is in intimate communion with this charming and noble spirit that M. James Darmesteter pursues his labours, prepares his lectures and publishes the records and the memories that he has brought back from India.

POPULAR TALES AND SONGS:*
JEAN-FRANÇOIS BLADE

I

I DID not think to return so soon, even in spirit, to this pleasant town of Agen, where, last month, thanks to the *félibres,* I received so warm a welcome. I still seem to see it lying at the foot of its hill, without magnificence, but not without grace, with its Roman tower, its arcaded streets, the broad silver reaches of its river, and its daughters of the people, who, with their brightly-coloured head-bands, wear their beauty with tranquillity, as an ancient heritage.

I bade the little Venus in the museum, so slenderly graceful, so fine, a farewell which I believed would be a long one, if not eternal. And lo! already she beckons me, calling me back to the warm, sweet Agenais countryside. She says: "Return in imagination to the banks of my Garonne and read the tales and the poems of Gascony gathered by Jean-François Bladé. Make no mistake: Bladé is learned, but he has taste, grace, charm. His books

* *Poésies et contes populaires de la Gascogne,* by Jean François Bladé, correspondent of the Institut de France (in the collection of *Littératures populaires,* by Maisonneuve and Leclere) 6 vols. *Traditions, coutumes, légendes et contes des Ardennes,* by Albert Meyrac, with a preface by Paul Sébillot, 1 vol. *Esthétique de la tradition,* by Emile Blémont, and *Études traditionnistes,* from the English of Andrew Lang (in the *Collection internationale de la tradition,* by MM. Emile Blémont and Henry Carnoy), 2 vols.

are learned books; nevertheless, I have drawn the tip of my girdle through them; you will note its fragrance in them."

And the little Venus of Agen has not deceived me. M. Bladé has collected the tales and songs of Gascony, and this was not merely a work of scholarship on his part; he has put into it, together with method and knowledge, something infinitely precious: love, and that grace, that beauty which made his book sacred to the little goddess whom we so greatly admired, Paul Arène and I, among the Gallo-Roman sculptures in the museum at Agen. I hope to make you realize how precious are these volumes. I wish to speak of them quietly, without haste, and if I cannot say everything to-day I shall return to them on the next occasion; these hours of autumn are the sweetest of the year, and one may converse at leisure in the quiet of the lengthening evenings.

And so we shall talk of rustic songs and stories, proverbs and charms. People like them, I know. They like them just as they like curious crucifixes, salt-cellars, Norman cupboards with a pediment on which two doves are kissing, pewter tureens such as hold the roast at a wedding-feast, flower-covered crockery, and dishes on which are painted a patron saint in a Bishop's vestments, or even a St. Catharine, a St. Dorothy, bearing the crown and the emblems of their blessed death. These are relics of the humble forbears from whom we spring. Fashion has meddled with them and has come near to spoiling them. In the case of old songs, as in that of old china, fraud has appeared in the service of vanity. But in all things we should consider the truth.

M. Bladé has spent more than twenty-five years

in collecting the tales and songs with which old servant-women had soothed his childhood. How he set to work he has told us in two delightful prefaces. He interrogated the good people of the countryside, the old men and women who knew the histories of the past. Others, no doubt, have done as much. M. Charles Guillon, for example, to whom we owe a collection of the *Chansons populaires de l'Ain,* patiently questioned the peasants of La Bresse.

It is not an easy business. "The peasant," says M. Gabriel Vicaire, "is very ready to imagine that one is making fun of him; excessively suspicious, he does not surrender without a fight. If you want to persuade him to serve your purpose you must tame him early. And even then, what disappointments! For a few discoveries of real value, how many worthless verses, insignificant refrains, borrowed from the repertory of the café-concerts! To say nothing of the interpolations, the innumerable bits of patchwork, amid which it is almost impossible to find one's bearings! If you ask for the explanation of some mysterious word, 'It's like that,' you are told; 'the song says so. I don't know any more about it.' Then the singer, if he is to be in the full possession of his faculties, needs to lubricate his throat profusely, and if you are imprudent enough to exceed the right dose his speech grows thick and his ideas confused; and thenceforward it is impossible to get anything out of him."

All these contingencies, all these difficulties, all these obstacles has M. Bladé known, and he has triumphed over them.

Marianne Bense, of Passage-d'Agen, the servant of a curé, and the widow Cadette Saint-Avit, of

Cazeneuve, were of great assistance to him; they knew as many tales as ever Mother Goose knew. Cazaux de Lecture was likewise an excellent story-teller. But his mistrust was extreme. He died full of years, God rest his soul! "I am certain," says M. Bladé, "that Cazaux was silent with regard to many things, and that he died without considering me as worthy of noting down half of what he knew." M. Bladé used to record the sayings of these village scholars. He was, to use his own phrase, "the honest and religious scribe." But he needed all his prudence, all his experience, all his knowledge, all his expedients for avoiding disaster. This was of two kinds. A careless collector runs the risk of collecting ineptitudes imagined for his benefit by the illiterate whom he is consulting; or imitations introduced into the district by some man of letters for the fun of the thing. These imitations have always been fairly common.

We know that the verses attributed to Olivier Basselin are the work of the advocate Le Houx, when they are not simply that of M. Julien Travers. As for Basselin's verses, they are lost, and, as the song says, we shall not have any further news of them: *Nous n'en "orrons" pas plus de nouvelles.* M. de Charrette's song:

Prends ton fusil, Grégoire,

which was greatly appreciated in the country houses after 1848, was written about this time, to an old air, by Paul Féval. It was not badly done, and, apart from an *ivory Virgin* placed, strangely enough, in a Chouan's knapsack, it is sufficiently Breton in appearance.

To do the thing well one must treat folk-lore with

all the rigour demanded by comparative mythology. It is a branch of the latter.

M. Maxime du Camp, who, it may be mentioned in passing, was interested in the songs of our villagers when scarcely anyone had ever thought of them, knows better than any one that in this matter, as in any other, falsehood is mingled with truth, and that the important thing is to distinguish one from the other. One day, turning over the leaves of I know not what collection, he recognized under the title: *Très ancienne chanson dont ou n'a pu retrouver la suite* ("A very old song the rest of which it was not possible to recover"), a facetious poem with which he was acquainted. "This poem," he tells us, "was written in my presence—some twenty-five years ago, when the English clowns came to act in some pantomimes in Paris, and had a certain success in the artists' studios."

A more remarkable adventure befell M. Paul Arène. We know that this perfect story-teller, this true poet, was in 1870 captain of francs-tireurs and that he led a hundred Provençals to the war. He composed the words and music of a fine martial song which his men used to sing on the march:

Le Midi bouge,
Tout est rouge.*

It is only just to add that they behaved under fire like the brave fellows that they were. Their captain too was a valiant little man, adroit and skilful, for in his early youth he had, for amusement, fought in the Camargue bull-fights. It is even said, but I don't believe a word of it, that our excellent colleague M. Francisque Sarcey never spoke of Paul Arène

* "The South is astir, and all is red. . . ."

save as a torero. However this may be, after the war Paul Arène put by the képi and the sword. About 1874, being in Paris, which he loves because it is a city in which there are a great many trees, he was invited one evening to the house of a lady who promised that he should hear a popular song, a really natural popular song it was, the like of which was never known, and which had been noted down among the shepherds.

Paul Arène accepted the invitation. Some one sang:

Le Midi bouge,
Tout est rouge.

And when it was finished every one admired and applauded.

"There was no mistaking that; it was indeed a natural poem, born of love and shaped without labour; its beauty told that clearly enough. How plainly, in these verses, in this song, one heard the voices of the peasant heroes who gave their lives without telling their names! Art always betrays itself by something cold or emphatic, something fantastic or conventional. What poet could have struck this note so truly, could have spoken with so genuine an accent of anger and goodly hatred? No, it was not an artist, a poet by calling who conceived *Le Midi rouge!*"

M. Paul Arène listened to these remarks with the expression that some of us are familiar with; and with that immovable countenance, which seems to have been carved out of the box-wood of a sacred grove by a goat-herd beloved of the gods in the days of the fauns and the dryads. He listened and held his peace. Another, a lesser spirit, would have gratified himself by gathering to himself these

praises that had gone astray. He would have perturbed their enthusiasm. M. Arène preferred to enjoy it. He experienced, in doing so, a more delicate pleasure. He nodded his head in approval. Perhaps he even gave himself the pleasure of partaking in the general illusion and regarding his song, for a moment, as a popular song, like the song of a French skylark, given forth one morning on the edge of the blood-stained field. And, after all, he had the right to do so. When he made his song he was no longer merely Paul Arène, he was the French people, he was all those who were marching, their muskets upon their shoulders, to fight for their native land. His song had become a popular song. It travelled along the roads, halting of a Sunday in the village taverns. It was with this song as with others. Some one had to make them, and the poet was not always a shepherd; sometimes, I imagine, he was a gentleman. Why should not a gentleman, by chance, as well as a peasant, make poems of war or of love?

II

M. Bladé has collected the tales that the peasants of Gascony tell in the autumn evenings, after supper, on the threshing-floors while they are threshing the maize. We who live in the cities find it hard to believe that among the countrymen whom we meet in the fields there may be fine story-tellers, and that from these lips, sealed by solitude, prudence and meditation upon the subject of making money, there flow at certain times words as abundant as a Homeric rhapsody. Yet there were formerly, and there are still, in the villages, old women and old men who unfold, in a rhythmical voice and in their native

idiom, the tales that they learned from their grandparents. Such were Cadette Saint-Avit, of Cazeneuve, and Cazaux, of Lectoure, and many others whom M. Bladé interrogated for more than twenty-five years. Old Cazaux one day said to M. Bladé: "I have heard it said that you speak French as well as the advocates of Auch and even of Agen. Yet you are not a *francimant,* and there isn't a farmer that knows the patois better than you."

It was by means of this profound knowledge of dialects, by this comprehension of rural speech, feeling and life, that our scholar gained the confidence of the rustic narrators and explored tradition to a depth never previously reached. Further (as his friend Noulens told me—and he knew what he was talking about—when we were dining together at the Jasmin festival),* M. Bladé has a feeling for the grand style and of beauty of form. He is able to reconnoitre and follow up the epic vein, and to retain, fortunately for us, in his translations, the character, that is, the thing which, in art, matters most of all.

The world to which the popular tales of Gascony and the Agenais countryside admit us is a fairyland whose personages and scenes are for the most part known to us already. We must not be surprised at finding there Donkey-skin, Beauty and the Beast, and Bluebeard. Comparative mythology shows us the same myths everywhere. We know that humanity as a whole has amused itself since its childhood with a very small number of tales whose details it varies to infinity without ever changing

* Jacques Boé, commonly called Jasmin (1798–1864). A Gascon poet, born at Agen, and popularly known as "the Wigmaker Poet." He wrote in patois, and published a collection of his best known poems under the title of *Las Papillots.*—(Editor.)

the child-like, sacred foundation. "To-day," says M. Bladé, "in the songs as in the prose legends, the unity of many of the popular themes is plainly apparent." But these old, eternal stories, passing from country to country, take on the hues of the sky, the mountains and the rivers, and become impregnated with the odours of the earth. It is precisely this that gives them their subtle shades and their fragrance; they absorb, as honey does, a savour of the soil. Something of the minds through which they have passed remains in them; and this is why they are dear to us.

We meet many excellent people in the Gascon tales. We see the king valiant as a sword and honest as gold, who gives abundant alms at the gate of his castle, and the young man, strong as a bull, who loves the princess lovely as the day, discreet as a saint and rich as the sea. And he says to himself: "This demoiselle must become my wife. Otherwise I am capable of causing great misfortunes." Sometimes this young man turns out to be the natural son of the King of France; in this case he has a fleur-de-lis in gold marked upon his tongue. He serves in the dragoons and, except that he is a little violent, he is the best young fellow in the world. As for the women, it is remarkable that the least beautiful are also the least virtuous. "Ugly as sin and wicked as hell," says the narrator as a rule, for he is a good Christian and would like sin always to be ugly.

All these characters are extremely simple, and they have extraordinary adventures. We hear of nothing but children exposed, like Œdipus, at birth, who, after traversing a thousand perils, return as avengers to their native palace; princes who brave

the serpent crowned with gold and pluck the flower that heals or the flower that sings, young princesses, who, like Melusina, withdraw from their lovers because the latter have gazed upon them although forbidden; men ravished into the air and men metamorphosed. All these tales, you will see, date from the days when the beasts used to speak. You will hear in them the voice of the mother of fleas, the king of crows, the queen of the vipers and the priest of the wolves, who says Mass once a year. Gascon folk-lore is very rich in mythical animals. You will find in it serpents that guard gold that is hidden underground; the mandagot, that gives wealth, the basilisk, whose forehead bears an emperor's crown, and the sirens who comb their silken tresses with combs of gold. You will find in them, too, those curious old acquaintances of the traditionalist: the animals, wolves, fish, or great beasts with human heads, who, being mortally wounded, reveal to the victor the marvellous properties of their flesh and blood. There are also beast-men like the Green Man, the master of all flying creatures, and men who change into beasts like the blacksmith who becomes an otter every night. But we should never have done were we merely to indicate all this marvellous zoology. We will only remark that the banks of the Garonne are haunted, like the banks of the Rhine, by fairies and long-bearded dwarfs. Toward the mountains lies the country of the ogres or Bécats, who have one eye only, and that in the middle of the forehead.

Sometimes the Dracs make their appearance in the countryside. These are little sprites whose especial business it is to torment horses. Old Cazaux has seen them, as true as we shall all die. He

has also seen, or might have seen, the Marranque and the Jambe-Crue, who prowl by night round the farms and behind the haystacks.

In the night the dead walk. They are for the most part of an unpleasant temper. A landowner of Mirande or Lectoure, I am not sure which, had the imprudence to invite one of them to supper. At the stroke of midnight a skeleton knocked at the door of the manor-house and put all the men-servants to flight. The master made himself agreeable and ate with his companion, who, to return his polite attention, begged him to sup with him the following night in the churchyard. Our Gascon, no less audacious than Don Juan, was more adroit or more fortunate. He went to sup with the dead, and he returned safe and sound. I may say, too, that we shall find in Gascony the grateful dead man who gives assistance or shows the traveller who has given him burial, where treasure is hidden.

This is the subject of the oldest novel in the world; the Chaldean romance whence the Jews derived the story of Tobias, lately done into verse by Maurice Boucher. In order to gain a conception of all the magic that may find its way into the head of a Gascon peasant, we must add to these phantoms, these spectres, these Terrors, as they call them, the witches' sabbath with all its sorceries, its ill-wishings,* and the Mass of Saint Sécaire. M. Bladé warns us that this is a very widespread

* *Envoûtements:* the making of an image of the person or animal to be injured, which image is then stuck with pins or burned, etc., as in Rossetti's poem of *Sister Helen.* The living original is supposed to suffer all the injuries inflicted upon the image: and if he knows what is being done very often does suffer, by force of suggestion. (Editor.)

superstition in Gascony. And he reminds me of what I was told in this connection some few years ago by the curé of a little parish situated in the Gironde, between Cadillac and Langoiran.

At the time when he was vicar of Saint Serin at Bordeaux this priest one day received in the sacristy of his church a visit from a peasant who wished him to say the Mass of Saint-Sécaire. The man wanted to *sécher,* to wither, to cause to pine away, a neighbour of his who had ill-wished his daughter and his cow! "The beast is dead," he said; "the child isn't much better. There's only just time to wither up the ill-wisher by having the Mass of Saint-Sécaire said for his intention. I'll pay whatever is necessary."

The vicar would not say the Mass. But he would have preferred to have said he could not. To say it one must know it, and all priests do not know it. And then the rite is a strict one. It can only be celebrated in a ruined or profaned church. At the stroke of eleven the celebrant approaches the altar, followed by a woman of evil life, who serves as clerk. He begins the office at the end and continues to say it backwards, completing it precisely at midnight. The Host is black and three-cornered. The wine is replaced by the water of a spring into which the body of a child who has died without baptism has been thrown. The sign of the cross is made upon the floor with the left foot. And the frogs croak. My village curé is a simple, jovial man; as far as I know him he would never, for silver or gold, have sung the Mass of Saint-Sécaire.

The devil appears sometimes in person to the peasants of the Garonne and the Tarn. But at Lectoure, as at Papefiguière, he is as foolish as he is

wicked, and is always duped. We shall find him in M. Bladé's collection as we have seen him in La Fontaine's fable, and as I knew him first in my childhood from the Angevin tales that my father, I remember, used to tell me, leaning of an evening over the little railed bed in which I used to dream such marvellous dreams. This incongruous poltroon of a devil gets nothing but thumps and serves as a butt for the cunning blades and the crafty gossips of the tales. *Le bon Dieu,* too, on occasion, takes a turn through this fair country of Gascony for a diversion. He takes a little money with him, knowing that this is the great viaticum in the sublunary world, and followed by Saint Peter he takes the road. "One day, as both were riding along, they met a waggon of hay overturned. On his knees in the road the driver was weeping and calling out:

'My God, have pity on me! Lift up my waggon! Have pity on me!'

'Good God,' says Saint Peter, 'won't you have pity on this poor man?'

'No, Saint Peter. Let us get on. He who doesn't help himself does not deserve to be helped.'

A little further on they came upon another waggon of hay upset. The driver was doing his utmost to get it on its wheels again and was shouting: 'Get a move on, b—— you! Ha! Mascaret! ha! Mulet! (these were the names of his oxen). Ho! Cheerly, now! By the thousand gods!'

'Good God, let us pass quickly,' says Saint Peter. 'This waggoner swears like a pagan; he deserves no pity.'

But the good God replied:

'Hold your tongue, Saint Peter. He who helps himself deserves to be helped.'

And he dismounted and helped the waggoner out of his fix."

M. Bladé has collected separately, under the title of *Traditions gréco-latines* four tales whose subject will be found among the myths of the two antiquities. Perhaps he has no very good reason for grouping them thus for he seems thereby to hint that the tales come from the Greek or Latin, which is neither proved nor probable.

The first of these tales is one of the numerous variants of the fable of Psyche. Like the bride of Eros, the queen in the story lets a drop of hot wax fall upon the one she loves, whom she loses because she has sought to know him. And this is one of the most beautiful symbols that the human imagination has ever created. Another tale shows us the Sphinx, a virgin Sphinx, on the watch for travellers in a pass of the Pyrenees. The taste for riddles is very keen among the peasants, and especially so in Gascony, and the Sphinx of the Pyrenees soon found her Œdipus in the person of a young villager. The Bishop of Auch taught him how he should go about killing her. Monsigneur was responsible for the death of the winged virgin. After all, she was a cruel creature. Dead, she was buried without prayer to God, "because," says the tale, "the beasts have no souls." Is it possible that one of those tales in which the beasts have speech should say such a thing? The finest story of this Græco-Latin series is entitled "The Lord's Return." While the feudal lord is in the Holy Land three brothers, strong as bulls, have made themselves the master of his castle,

his wife and his son having found no kinsman or friend to defend them. This is the story of Ulysses and Penelope and the suitors.

The new Ulysses, like the old, returns to his home in the rags of a beggar and is not recognized. He delivers his wife from the suitors. In a moment the three brothers were lying on the ground, bleeding like pigs. Then the seigneur greeted his wife, saying:

"Madame, you see how I work. What will you give me in payment?"

"Poor man, I will give you half my property."

"Madame, it is not enough. You must be my wife."

"No, poor man. Never will I be your wife."

"Madame, you see how I work. Say 'No' once again and I will smite you also, you and your child."

"As the good God wills! No, I did not want these three gallants. I do not want you. Smite us, me and my son."

"Madame, I should do wrong, for you are my wife, and the child is my child."

"Poor man, if I am your wife, if this child is your child, prove that you have spoken the truth."

"Wife, here is the half of my marriage-contract. Show me yours." (They had cut the contract in two when they parted.)

"It is true. You are my husband."

Then the lord embraces his wife and son. All three sit at table and sup with a good appetite.

The return of the traveller to his wife, his disguise and the final recognition is the very foundation of the *Odyssey* itself, and it is, at the same time, says Mr. Andrew Lang, "one of the best-known formulæ of traditionalism." As a matter of fact, we meet with it in the songs of the Messina countryside and in those of Brittany and in a Chinese tale.

The Penelope of the Celestial Empire is a lady of defiant virtue; she still fails to recognize her husband when all those about her have recognized him, and in her doubt she threatens to hang herself if he approaches. And Mr. Andrew Lang calls our attention to the fact that at most the *Odyssey* "is only an assemblage of popular tales artistically treated and fashioned into a symmetrical whole." One tale in Mr. Bladé's collection provides us with a variant of the fable of Ulysses and the Cyclops. It is one of the crudest of those that found their way into the Homeric epic. "The Greek imagination itself was unable to polish it sufficiently to remove the traces of its primitive uncouthness," so says Mr. Lang. I refer to his words with pleasure because his judgment is peculiarly agreeable to me. Mr. Lang, whose *Études traditionnistes* have just been published in French, with an excellent preface by M. Emile Blémont, is learned yet brief, bold yet tactful. If I add that he infuses a certain humour into his discussions, it will be realized that it is a pleasure to converse with this English student of tradition. I should like to make him better known to you; but I can only mention in passing his brief but interesting dissertation on the popular tales in Homer. One sees from this (what we, for our part, had already at least suspected) that the Homeric epic is composed of popular tales as naive as those that oral tradition has preserved in our country districts. One sees also how these crude elements have been polished by the great assembler, and one admires as much as ever, and even more than ever, the sure and instinctive beauty of this young poetry of the Greeks. Still, we must see it as it is, fresh and songful, fluid and gushing from the spring. It

is divine, to be sure, but let us not forget that all the popular Muses, even the humblest, are of the same family and closely related to it.

Shakespeare also is not entirely divorced from the oral poetry of the people. He, too, delved into tradition as readily as into history. Here, collated and translated by M. Bladé, is the story of "The Queen Chastised" (*La Reine châtiée*), in which we find the theme of the story of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, which the great Will immortalized. This tale, which this circumstance alone would render interesting, reveals in itself a very beautiful style and is truly epic in spirit. M. Bladé is well aware that it is the richest gem of his casket. I will try to give you some idea of it by quoting one or two scenes *verbatim*. The king, who was a good and a just monarch, is dead.

They buried him the following day.

His son gave much gold and silver in alms and for prayers. On returning from the burial-ground he said to the people in the castle:

"Serving-men, make my bed in my poor father's room."

"King, you shall be obeyed."

The new king shut himself up in his poor father's room. He fell on his knees and prayed to God for a very long time. This done, he threw himself, fully clothed, on his bed and fell asleep. The first stroke of midnight awoke him. A phantom was looking at him without saying anything.

The dead man took his son by the hand and led him in the night to the other end of the castle. Then he opened a secret hiding-place and pointed to a half-filled phial:

"Thy mother has poisoned me. Thou art king. Avenge me!"

At this news the young king goes down to the stable, saddles his best horse and sets out in the black night. He charges one of his friends to tell his betrothed that he will never see her again and that she must go into a convent; and he retires among the eagles, upon a mountain, where he drinks the water of the springs and eats the wild berries. Then his father appears to him and for the

second time, and for the third time, calls upon him to avenge him.

"Father, you shall be obeyed."

At sunset he knocked upon the gate of his castle.

"Good evening, mother, my poor mother."

"Good evening, my son. Whence come you? I wish to know."

"My mother, my poor mother, I will tell you at supper. I will tell you when we are alone. To table!—I am hungry."

They sat at table, the two of them. When they were alone the king said:

"My mother, my poor mother, you wish to know whence I come. I have been into the country. I have just married my mistress. To-morrow you will have her here."

To understand what follows you must know that the idea of having a daughter-in-law to whom she will surrender her power has long been intolerable to the wicked queen.

The queen listened without saying a word. She went out and returned a moment later.

"Thy wife arrives to-morrow. So much the better! We will drink her health."

Then the king drew his sword and laid it on the table.

"Hearken, my mother, my poor mother. You wish to poison me. I forgive you. But my father does not forgive you. Three times has he returned from the other world and has said to me: 'Thy mother has poisoned me. Thou art king. Avenge me!' Yesterday I replied: 'Father, you shall be obeyed.' My mother, my poor mother, pray God that he may have pity on your soul. Consider this sword; consider it well. I give you the time to say a Pater, and I cut off your head if you have not drunk the poison which you have poured out for me. Drink, drink to the dregs, my mother, my poor mother."

The queen emptied the glass to the dregs. Five minutes later she was as green as grass.

"Forgive me, my mother, my poor mother."

"No."

The queen fell under the table. She was dead. Then the king kneeled and prayed to God. Then he went down quickly to the stable, leaped upon his horse and set out at a swift gallop into the dark night.

He was never seen again, never.

I do not know, but it certainly seems to me that here, in the elevation of its tone and feeling, the story joins hands with the epic, and that this fireside tale of Cazeneuve or Sainte-Eulalie is as good as a saga from the Edda.

The popular tales of Gascony furnish a very small contribution to history. And this will not surprise the student of tradition, who knows how few historic memories are the songs and stories of the peasantry. Henry IV figures on several occasions in these narratives, which have so often been repeated in the neighbourhood of his château. But the actions attributed to him are not his; they are traditional *facetiæ*. Here is what is said of this prince in the tale of the "Two Presents." "Henry IV was a king who was over six feet * high, broad in proportion, strong as a bull and bold as Cæsar. He gave much in alms and did not love intriguers. Before he went to settle in Paris, this king dwelt at Nérac; and he had Roquelaure beside him always, who was the greatest jester in France." It will be admitted that this is a very distorted memory. That of Napoleon is less untrue in the fine tale of "The Seven Fair Demoiselles." A village lad of Frandat wished to avoid conscription. He whistled to his dog and went off into the woods with his gun. There he lived for seven years, when, on St. John's Eve, he heard, hidden in a hollow willow-tree, the seven fair demoiselles who know everything singing as they danced: "Napoleon has finished making war upon the kings of the earth. His enemies have made him a prisoner on an island in the sea. . . . Peace is made. In Paris the King of France has returned to his Louvre."

* A French fathom (*une toise*) is about 6 ft. 5 in. (Editor.)

Having heard such news, the deserter emerged from the hollow willow-tree, slung his gun across his back, whistled to his dog, and returned quietly to his parents' house.

Besides Henry IV and Napoleon, I find hardly anyone else, excepting Rascat, whose name is preserved in the popular tales of Gascony. This Rascat was neither emperor nor king. Executioner of the seneschalry of Lectoure before the Revolution, he had to execute the sentences of the criminal court at Auch and guillotined a great number of aristocrats during the Terror. There he grew old in peace in his native village. M. Bladé tells us that he lived on a very small pension which the Restoration and the government of July bestowed upon him. He was also paid a salary by the town as a collector of the market dues.

Henry IV, Napoleon and Rascat—these are the three names which the people has not forgotten!

III

This comes of going into the woods where the fairies dwell. One stops at every flower-filled thicket, and it is a walk that has no ending. Ours will have lasted three weeks. But let us not complain. Where can one better lose and forget oneself than in the singing forest of popular traditions? I have given you some idea of the tales of the Gascony Nights. The "pious scribe" has also collected the rustic poetry of Gascony and the Agenais. When one has tasted this wild honey of the Garonne one has before long to return to it, so fine and so penetrating is its fragrance. What surprises and delights us in these village songs is their good style,

and that purity of form which may be divined in the literal translation. The Garonne marks the frontier for those antique waggoners who sing the death of Daphnis and were heard by Theocritus and Moschus. I cannot speak the tongue of Jasmin and I never shall be able to. But I am perfectly sure that the songs collected by M. Bladé are written in a style that is pure as a diamond. And this poetry is a living poetry, associated with the lives of men. It is domestic and religious. It is sung over the cradles, at wedding-feasts, during the labours of the fields, and at the funeral repasts that are known in the Garonne as the *noces tristes;* it sings in all the joyous or lugubrious celebrations of the Church which have slowly and insensibly replaced the ceremonies of the pagans only because they corresponded, as did the ancient cult, with natural conditions and states of the soul. In M. Bladé's collection I have found the most charming Christmas carols. They have an antique grace, and while they may be compared in the matter of feeling with the carols of our Northern France, they excel them in the matter of form. Where, for example, is there anything more exquisite than these two quatrains on the child Jesus at Bethlehem?

Il est dans la crèche,
Couché tout le long.
Dans le ciel les anges
Jouent du violon.

Le bœuf et la mule
Lui respirent dessus.
Voilà le réchauffement
Du divin Jésus.*

* He is in the manger—along it he lies—in Heaven the angels—play upon the viol.—The ox and the mule—Breathe down upon him.—Thus is he given warmth—The divine Jesus.

These popular poems of Gascony are infinitely various in tone and in manner. Some display the gracious austerity of an epigram from the *Anthology;* some, touched with a mysticism at once childish and refined, are meaningless and yet delightful. These latter are peculiarly interesting in this, that they seem to have sought to express the inexpressible, to utter the ineffable, which is precisely the ideal of symbolic poetry, the aim of the new art and the art of the future, as far as I can understand after reading M. Charles Morice, who, unfortunately, does not always wish me to understand him. I will quote as an example of this instinctive poetry the "Little Paternoster," which the women of Agen recite in order to win to Heaven:

Notre Seigneur s'est levé,
Par neuf chambres il est passé,
Neuf Maries il a trouvé.
Neuf Maries, que faites-vous?
Nous baptisons le fils de Dieu.
Neuf Maries, que portez-vous?
De l'huile, du chrême et le saint rosier.
Sous cet arbre, les fleurettes
N'ont ni ombre
Ni couleurs
Sombres.
Notre Siegneur est monté sur l'escalier de Dieu,
Pleuré sur terre des morts et des vivants,
Un angelot de Dieu.*

*Our Lord arose,—Through nine chambers he went—Nine Maries he found.—Nine Maries, what are you doing?—We are baptising the Son of God.—Nine Maries, what are you carrying?—Oil, chrysm and the holy thorn.—Under this tree the blossoms—Have neither shadow—Nor dim colours.—Our Lord has climbed the stairs of God,—Mourned upon earth by the dead and the living—a little angel of God.

This "little Paternoster" has been condemned by the Church as tainted with superstition and idolatry. It is not for me to defend it from the standpoint of orthodoxy. But I love the tender poetry of it, the candid mystery, and, if I may venture to say so, the white obscurity. It seems to me that his mysticism, as heterodox as it is sincere, has inspired that fervent symbolist, that youthful mage, the author of *Les Lis noirs,* M. Alber Jhouney, with nothing more delightful than this.

I cannot restrain myself from following up this mystical vein a moment longer; I must quote a *Complainte de Marie-Madeleine,* the pearl of this village jewel, this crucifix, whose gems M. Bladé has set like a cunning jeweller:

Marie-Madeleine
Pécheresse de Dieu,
Pourquoi avez-vous péché?
Jésus, mon Dieu Jésus,
Je ne me connais aucun péché.

Marie-Madeleine
Sept ans dans les montagnes
Vous irez demeurer.
Au bout de sept années
Elle se retira.

Marie-Madeleine
S'en va dans les montagnes,
Sept ans elle y a demeuré.
Au bout de sept années,
Proche d'un ruisseau elle s'en va.

Marie-Madeleine,
Les mains au courant de l'eau,
Les mains s'en va se laver.
Quand elle se les a lavées
Elle les admire.

Marie-Madeleine
Sept ans dans les montagnes
Vous reviendrez demeurer.
Jésus, mon Dieu Jésus,
Tout que vous voudrez.

Marie-Madeleine
Au bout de sept années
Jésus l'alla trouver:
Marie Madeleine
Au ciel il faut aller.*

Much might be said of this fair worshipper who washes her white hands in the streams of the holy solitudes. We find her in Provence, in Catalonia, in Italy, in England, in Denmark, in Sweden, in Norway, in Germany, and among the Czechs. I have just received a scholarly and distinguished work by M. George Doncieux upon the cycle of Mary Magdalene,† and I understand that this volume is only a chapter of an unpublished work which we shall read and study with pleasure.

* —Mary Magdalene,—You have sinned against God—Why did you sin?—Jesus, my Lord Jesus—I am not conscious of any sin.

—Mary Magdalene,—Seven years in the mountains.—You will dwell.—At the end of seven years—She withdrew herself.

—Mary Magdalene—Goes into the mountains.—Seven years she dwelt there.—At the end of seven years—She departs, coming to a stream.

—Mary Magdalene,—Her hands in the running water—Her hands she proceeds to wash.—When she has washed them—She admires them.

—Mary Magdalene—You will return to dwell—Seven years in the mountains—Jesus, my Lord Jesus—As long as you will.

—Mary Magdalene,—At the end of seven years,—Jesus went to find her:—Mary Magdalene.—It is time to go to Heaven.

† Vannes, 1891, in 8vo. (Reprinted from the *Revue des traditions populaires.*)

We must take our leave of M. Jean-François Bladé and entrust ourselves to another guide, M. Albert Meyrac, who awaits us at the other end of France, in the gloom of the Ardennes.

IV

ALBERT MEYRAC

M. Albert Meyrac is a journalist; he edits the *Petit Ardennais* at Charleville. There, on the Meuse, having read M. Paul Sébillot's works on Breton folklore, he determined to collect the traditions, customs and legends of the department to which politics had assigned him. He set to work ardently, with that mental agility which is developed by the practice of daily journalism. He went into the villages, interrogating the old men and women. This was not enough. He appealed to all people of goodwill, and his newspaper carried this appeal into all parts of the department. The schoolmasters especially were prompt in their response. Their assistance was no doubt very useful to him. But in general the schoolmaster is not the right man to collect popular traditions; he is lacking in simplicity. He is inclined to embellish, to correct. However careful he may have been to protect himself against the zeal of his collaborators, M. Meyrac has admitted more than one narrative to his collection whose style recalls the schoolmaster rather than the peasant.

In certain legends the touching-up is evident. This is a defect that the most skilful collectors cannot always avoid. It is not so easy as might be sup-

posed to obtain a faithful copy of an old text. M. Amélineau knows something of this. Having gone to search in the Greek monasteries of Egypt for documents touching the history of the solitaries of the Thebaïd and of Nitria, the scholar was rewarded by an abundance of remarkable discoveries. Notably he found in one monastery a precious and ancient text which a young Copt undertook to copy without omissions. This Copt was highly intelligent; his work completed, he brought it to M. Amélineau:

"Master," he said, with a smile of satisfaction, "you will be pleased with my work. I have done better than I promised. I have corrected, as regards the style, all that was uncouth and old-fashioned. I have replaced, to the best of my ability, the old phrases by other more ingenious phrases. You will think, when you read my copy, that you are reading a new book."

M. Meyrac, who has the prime virtue of a student of tradition, I mean suspiciousness, is as well aware as anyone of the danger of intermediaries. But he had need of them; without collaboration his book could not have been completed in two years.

We should have had to wait another ten or twenty years at least, and this would have been a pity, for, such as it is, this is a very useful and interesting work. I have read it, for my own part, with the greatest pleasure.

This vast table-land, covered with heaths and forests, intersected by deep ravines, where the rusty fangs of the rocks pierce the dark foliage, these bare bones of the earth, the *rièzes* of Rocroi, these wide, slumbering expanses of water, known as *fagnes*—all the Ardennes, in short, was in the days of old concealed by the woodlands of this huge dark forest,

stretching from the Scheldt to the Rhine. Its character has made its legends; its traditions are forest traditions. We see phantom hunts go by; we hear the *taïaut, taïaut,* of the demon huntsman. Diana reigned there with St. Hubert. This Diana of the Ardennes had not the graceful majesty which the art of Greece and Italy bestowed upon the sister of Apollo.

The goddess was barbaric, like her followers. The gods are wont to resemble those who adore them. In the village of Eposium, to-day Carignan, her image stood, enormous and monstrous. It was still standing in the days of Clotaire's sons, when a Lombard deacon, named Vulfaï or Valfroy, came to convert the country.

He was a man of great virtue. Having seen the people of Eposium hanging garlands at the foot of the sacred image, dancing in a circle and singing hymns, he was filled with anger. These hymns especially seemed to him abominable. We do not know what they were; but we may suppose that he judged them with too much prejudice. However this may be, he violently attacked the cult of the Ardennes' Virgin. He was eloquent. Moreover, there were already a large number of Christains at Eposium; he persuaded a little band of resolute men to accompany him and overthrow the idol. They dragged it to the ground with difficulty by means of ropes, praying as they did so. It broke into pieces; and, as he was full of faith, he knew that it was the prayers and not the ropes that had done the work. St. Valfroy became a hermit after his apostolate and decided to lead a solitary life. Following the example of St. Simeon Stylites, he had a column erected on which he remained with naked

feet all the winter, so that his toe-nails fell off several times. Thus perished Diana of the Ardennes. After her, St. Hubert became the patron of the forest. Hubert was an indefatigable hunter. As he was hunting on the Friday of Holy Week he saw a great stag which was bearing a cross of gold between its antlers. The miraculous beast spoke to him, saying:

"Hubert! Hubert! wilt thou always persecute the creatures of the forest? And will the pleasure of the chase make thee forget the salvation of thy soul?"

Here we have the marvellous as it has emerged from the forest. The lake, the marsh or *fagne*, has produced the *annequins* and the *lumerettes,* which, like will-o'-the-wisps, dance in the night before strayed travellers, drawing them into the rushes, where they are drowned. The Ardennes have their fairies also. They are village fairies, who spin flax, bake cakes and wash linen by the river-bank like the peasant women. It appears from the researches of M. Albert Meyrac that witchcraft was widely practised in the countryside and that witches' sabbaths were frequent. The witches, according to the general custom, used to travel thither upon a broomstick, or changed into black hens. There, as elsewhere, wizards had only to rub themselves with a certain ointment, while pronouncing magic words, in order to metamorphose themselves into a cat or a fowl. M. Meyrac has noted the superstitions which still survive. The peasant of the Ardennes still retains his ancient faith in the *sagneuse* who heals by making the sign of the cross, and he is not yet prepared to abandon the remedies of the wizards and sorcerers. He has not lost all memory of the fabulous animals which peopled the legendary Ar-

dennes. In particular he remembers the *mahwot*, which is as big as a calf and shaped like a lizard. Concealed in the Meuse, it emerges only to announce misfortune. The *mahwot* was seen in 1870.

I leave this subject with regret. I should have many reflections to offer concerning M. Meyrac's book if there were the space for them. But the nature of these tales will not permit one to exhaust one's subject. We have already said a great deal about rustic songs and popular tales. To those who would reproach us too severely therewith, we might reply in the admirable words of a poet:

"The literature that divorces itself disdainfully from the people is like an uprooted plant. . . .

"It is in the heart of the people that art and poetry should steep themselves continually, in order to remain green and flourishing. It is their fountain of youth."

Thus M. Emile Blémont in his æsthetic of tradition, a highly eloquent little book, full of philosophy. And he speaks truly. Above all, do not let us condemn the popular tale in the name of classic art; for Homer's *Odyssey,* as we have seen, is made up of popular tales.

FATHER DIDON AND HIS BOOK UPON JESUS CHRIST

ESTORED, in France, under the monarchy of July by a romantic, the Dominicans pass, among us, for the most artistic of monks, and people will have it, whether rightly or wrongly, that they have inherited from Father Lacordaire the sense of the picturesque, a certain feeling for effect, a taste for novelty and even an apparent sympathy with the modern spirit. This, no doubt, is a vague impression, formed from the outside and from a distance, which is neither wholly correct nor wholly erroneous. At bottom there is nothing more unintelligible and impenetrable than the soul of a monk. The mentality of these cenobites who live in common the better to savour solitude is as strange as their life. And when a monk has meddled in secular affairs, as is the case with almost all the great monks, the psychologist finds himself confronted by one of the rarest moral curiosities that humanity can offer.

What a wonderful subject for investigation is the state of mind of a Lacordaire who concerns himself simultaneously with the anxieties of the liberal opposition and the works of penitence, inspiring political journals and having himself bound to a crucifix! I confess, for my own part, that from St. Anthony to Father Didon, the monks amaze me. As for defining the physiognomy of the restored

Dominicans, that is a peculiarly delicate business. To begin with, it is not to be supposed that they all derive alike from their spiritual father, by way of a liberal mentality, the language of romanticism and a taste for the ascetic delights of flagellation and crucifixion. I have approached a few of these sons of Dominic and Lacordaire. They have not opened their minds to me; the monk never reveals himself, he does not belong to himself; but these monks did not seem to be either suspicious or dishonest. They were, to all appearances, excellent monks.

They had a quiet and cheerful air. The good monk is always gay; cheerfulness is one of the virtues of his state, and the hagiographers are careful to record that the great St. Anthony retained in his old age the innocent joy of a child.

Concerning the things of the spirit, these preaching friars seem to me to have been nourished on St. Thomas Aquinas rather than on Lacordaire. Moreover, we have heard Father Monsabré often enough at Notre Dame to realize that his eloquence, wholly scholastic, owes nothing to modern science or philosophy; that the *Summa* is its sole source. The Dominicans whom I have been fated to meet have all been like Father Monsabré, with the exception of one, who was more intelligent, tenderer and more troubled; him I will not name. They are, before all else, monks, that is to say obedient men, whose rather dull clay has been pressed into the mould that has been traditional for so many centuries. Yet, as I was saying just now, the preaching friars have retained, in France, some of the characteristics which their second founder, the new Dominic, impressed upon them, and the host of

believers instinctively expect from these men, clothed in the white scapular and carrying the chaplet at their girdle, new words and bold acts, and they accord them a little of that affection that was formerly inspired in the people not by the disciples of Dominic, but by their violent adversaries, the worthy children of St. Francis. Without inquiring why this expectation is entirely vain and bound to be disappointed, we must recognize that such a man as Father Didon is capable of sustaining and prolonging it awhile.

This monk is an athlete. He has the incomparable charm of gentleness in strength. Keen black eyes light up his masculine olive-hued countenance. His chest is broad, his gestures free; he inspires sympathy and confidence; he is an orator even before he speaks. Springing from a vigorous race of highland folk, reared in the rugged, beautiful valley of the Grésivaudan, one seems to detect in him the old Dauphinois spirit, so tenacious, so positive, so laborious, so courageous in conflict. What is known of his life is calculated to inspire respect. It was about ten years ago that he first entered the pulpit of Saint-Philippe-du-Roule, and there, in all the fire of his youth and eloquence, he moved an audience that brought its profane perfumes to the foot of the altar. He touched, moved, and changed the hearts of his hearers, and saw the most beautiful of penitents at his feet. Whether his words had seemed too bold in respect of a sacrament which touches the profoundest secrets of the senses (he was speaking of marriage), or whether his superiors feared that he himself would become intoxicated by his own intoxicating speech, he was suddenly dragged from his pulpit and sent to dwell among the rocks of Corsica,

in the monastery of Corbara, which overlooks the island and the sea from the height of a promontory. He obeyed. Any other monk would of course have obeyed in the same manner. But Father Didon's character, as we know it, gives, it may be, some value to his obedience. He is eloquent, a little vainglorious, impatient to throw himself into the movement of opinions and ideals, and happy to mix with scientists and thinkers. I have even reasons for supposing that he has a genuine love for that odour of freshly-printed paper which one breathes in a printing establishment or at the publisher's. Well, this eloquent preacher was able to keep silence; this ambitious man hid himself away; he who might have cried with Lacordaire: "I shall be understood by this century, for I have loved everything relating to it," unhesitatingly entered into silence and solitude. I do not wish to insist on the merits of a good monk, as I recognize that I am no very fitting person to bestow such commendation. But the obedience of the priest and the soldier is not without beauty. At this period many members of the public thought to perceive in Father Didon another Father Hyacinth and foresaw a rupture, a schism, a revolt. The event gave the lie to these forecasts. Father Didon, who has common sense and a strong spirit of leadership, has not attempted to found a new church, to set himself up as an anti-Pope and to govern, like a certain other popeling, a Catholicity of fourteen souls. Father Didon sometimes alarms timid Catholics, and it would seem as though he does not always deny himself the pleasure of causing them anxiety. One of his compatriots, who belongs to the Catholic party, recognizing in this one of the traits of the Dauphinois character, said, in speaking

of the eloquent Father: "The mountaineer loves to skirt the precipices and takes pleasure in the alarm of those who watch him from the plain; but he is surefooted; he will not fall."

One of the most interesting traits of the character of this solitary is precisely the love of effect, the art of the *mise en scène,* the talent of the producer. Is this, in his case, the natural and instinctive gift of an oratorical temperament? Is it the natural tendency of a mind that is at the same time mystical and practical? Is it the fatality attaching to the broad white scapular, which weighs upon certain preaching friars in spite of their Christian humility? I do not know. But the reverend father's books are announced with a noise and a blaze that their merit alone is insufficient to explain, and at the present time the appearance of a new "Life of Jesus," written in a Burgundian monastery, is becoming a Parisian event. All the newspapers have been speaking for a year past of the book and its author, and it is with this work as with Cyrus, who was named long before he was born. We were promised a book of great originality, and Father Didon himself confirmed this promise when he replied, to a reporter:

"Why do you suppose I should have written the life of Jesus if it were not with the object of saying new things?"

And whenever the writer was pressed for information, we learned from his own lips that the greatest of the new things, that which included all the rest, was the reconciliation of Catholic dogma with modern exegesis.

This is the object which the reverend father proposed to himself in writing the two thick volumes

which have just appeared. In order to succeed in his object he went to a German university to learn the German language. He studied the critical investigations to which the various Protestant schools have subjected the text of the Gospels and the literary monuments of the earliest Christian ages. His book is intended as a work of positive history. He says expressly in his preface: "The life of Jesus must be related in accordance with the exigencies of history. It is to this profound need that the present essay responds."

And he does indeed bear the appearance of entering upon a criticism of the texts, affording a shadow of satisfaction to modern exegesis by attributing the birth of Jesus to the year 750 (Roman chronology), a few years before the first year of the Christian era; and also by admitting that Matthew and Mark are anterior to Luke, and that John is subsequent to the three synoptics. But he only touches the surface of this examination, and, without even expounding the conditions of the problem as to its more important details, he hastens to conclude in the canonical sense. And as though this rapid journey, or rather this flight through the province of independent criticism, had left him alarmed, he hastens to hide himself beneath the mantle of the Church; he declares that the Church, in matters of exegesis, possesses sovereign authority, and that the Church alone is able to comment upon the canonical texts. "By what right," he says, "do men treat them as a mere papyrus discovered in the tombs of some mummy, or as an old parchment forgotten amid the archives of a devastated city? . . . The first great mistake of modern criticism has been to treat these documents as a dead letter. It has consciously for-

gotten that they were not books whose copyright had expired; they are the inalienable property of the Catholic Church (pp. xxxix, xlv)." This language is not in any way surprising in the mouth of a believer; it is quite befitting a priest and a monk. No one will blame Father Didon for employing it. But if there is no exegesis outside the Catholic Church, why cite Reuss, Eichhorn and Schleiermacher? Are these names, which we find at the foot of the pages, nothing more than idle ornaments? And what does the writer seek to criticize, since there is no matter subject to criticism? Father Didon believes and professes that the books of the two Testaments are divinely inspired. Texts of this nature cannot be corrected. He has therefore refrained from any serious revision, and exegesis, for him, is merely a new and audacious manner of embellishing the apologia. He has brought rational criticism on to sacred soil merely in order to sacrifice it more solemnly. This generous imprudence has had disastrous results. For that is a disastrous stroke by which he attempts to reconcile the two genealogies of Jesus. He distinguishes between the legal genealogy and the natural genealogy of Joseph, which are, he says, at the same time the legal and natural genealogy of Mary and Jesus, since Joseph was the father or at least the nephew of Anne, the mother of Mary, as Cornelius declared to Lapidus, who was a Belgian. And Father Didon shows that he is satisfied with this little arrangement, so good-natured is he! How different was Pascal's temper! A great man, he feared God, but despised the world. He said, in respect of the very subject which we are considering: "The most visible weaknesses are sources of strength to those who conceive matters

rightly. For example, the two genealogies of St. Matthew and St. Luke. It is evident that these were not drawn up in agreement."

Here indeed is an apologist who is quite unembarrassed by the difficulties of exegesis! Father Rigolet himself did not argue with greater subtlety when he told the Emperor of China that the Church chose the four Gospels that contradicted one another the most in order that the truth should appear more plainly!

If I were a scholar I do not know whether I should care for such apologists as Pascal and Rigolet, but I am quite certain that scholars such as Father Didon would make me tremble. Was it not the latter who had the unhappy idea of entering upon a dispute with Mommsen on the subject of the Census of Quirinus? He emerged from it crushed. Why, in the name of heaven, did he endeavour to treat rationally certain details of an affair which he himself declared to be inconceivable and miraculous?

Father Didon believes in the supernatural. Far from blaming him for this we should praise him for confessing his faith. My own is contrary to his; I think I do well to admit it openly, and my merit in so doing is of course the less in that it is more generally admitted by those of our contemporaries whose opinion is to be reckoned with. But Father Didon's mistake is to imagine that one can write history while accepting the supernatural, when history is merely the research for the natural sequence of facts. And how can a man be an historian when his declared intention is to subtract the very subject with which he is dealing, that is, the

origins of Christianity, from the general laws of history?

And, since we are here speaking of miracles, I confess that, without in any way admitting their possibility, I do not clearly understand the arguments of those scholars who deny them. Our scholars usually say that they do not believe in miracles because no fact of the kind has been formally proved. My illustrious master, M. Ernest Renan, has several times put forward this argument in a perfectly definite manner: "Miracles," he says, "are things which never happen; not a single one can be cited which has occurred before witnesses capable of establishing its truth; no special intervention of divinity, whether in the making of a book, or in any happening whatever, has been proved." And this is indeed incontestable; but in theory these arguments, which are those of the best men of our time, seem to me weak, because they suppose that the laws of nature are known to us and that if, by some impossibility, a derogation of these laws were to occur, a scholar, or better still an academic body, would be qualified to establish its truth. This, I venture to say, is to grant a great deal too much to established science, and to suppose that we are acquainted with all the laws of the universe. The fact is quite otherwise. Our physics, it may be, will appear, in five or six centuries, to our descendants, as clumsy and barbarous as the physics of the mediæval universities appears to us now; yet these universities were learned bodies. To refer to science the discernment of natural facts and of supernatural facts is to treat it as though it were the infallible judge of the universe. Certainly, such as it is, it is

the sole arbiter of truth and error, and nothing is added to knowledge until it has been examined and passed by it. Certainly we cannot appeal from it, save to itself. At the same time, we must not cite all phenomena before its tribunal indifferently and in the same manner; for there may be singular, rare and subtle phenomena whose occurrence is uncertain. Official science will risk missing such phenomena if it waits for them to happen before its jury; it is in this respect that the argument advanced by M. Renan seems to me dangerous, at least in its tendencies. It amounts, if one is not careful, to considering that nothing can happen unless it occurs in a laboratory. The scientists are naturally inclined to deny isolated facts, which do not come under any known law. I am afraid, indeed, that they will reject unexpected manifestations just as they reject miraculous manifestations, and for the same reason: "No one has ever seen it." As for miracles, if they are a derogation from the laws of nature we do not know what they are, for no one is acquainted with the laws of nature. Not only has a philosopher never beheld a miracle; he is incapable of ever beholding one. All the thaumaturgists in the world might place before him the most extraordinary appearances, they would only be wasting their time. In observing all these marvellous facts he would concern himself solely with seeking the law controlling them, and if he did not discover it he would merely say: "Our knowledge of physics and chemistry is very incomplete." Thus there has never been a miracle in the true sense of the word, or, if there has been, we could not know of it, since, being ignorant of nature, we are equally ignorant of all that is not nature.

But let us return to Father Didon's book. It abounds in descriptions. Like M. Renan, the author has travelled in the East, and has brought back landscapes which, while they have not the suavity of those beautiful pictures of Nazareth and the Lake of Tiberias that M. Renan has painted from nature, are assuredly not lacking in richness and brilliance. One seems to see with the pious traveller the "opal waters" of the Lake of Genezareth and the desolation of the Dead Sea. I have noted a delightful passage descriptive of Samaria. The great novelty of the book consists, in short, of a picturesque Orientalism which is associated, for the first time, rather strangely, with the most precise orthodoxy. Thus Father Didon believes in the Adoration of the Magi, but he calls them "the sheikhs." His Jesus is the Son of God, but we see Him as a young man, bearing upon His arms and His forehead the phylacteries which He has received on the Sabbath-Tephilin in the synagogue of Nazareth. And all the scenes of the Gospel are similarly treated with romanticism and local colour.

But this work is not merely a series of plastic scenes. The author has tried to present the psychology of Jesus, and this is the most unfortunate part of the book. We cannot read without smiling that Jesus "had perfect knowledge of His Messianic vocation," that "He was lacking in nothing that could give His speech authority and prestige," that "no popular orator could be compared with Him," that "He respected the initiative of the conscience," and that the check suffered by His mission to Jerusalem caused Him "the greatest grief that could be felt by a man called upon to play a public part." This essay on humano-divine psychology makes one

involuntarily think of Barbey d'Aurevilly, who adored Jesus as God, but, as a man, preferred Hannibal.

I am not in a position to judge such a work from the orthodox point of view, and we must suppose that the theologians have found nothing reprehensible in it, since they have approved of it. I should be interested, however, to know what is thought of it by a certain review which is edited, with a great deal of knowledge and prudence, by the Jesuit Fathers, and with which I am very well acquainted, for they had the goodness to send it to me once when they were sorely mishandling me in it, although not as sorely as Father Gratry and Father Lacordaire. I am either greatly mistaken, or the dear Fathers do not find this romantic history and modern psychology much to their liking.* For my

*I am speaking here of *Les Études,* a review published by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. They have not spared my feelings in this review, but it is not in the power of the Fathers to cause me to be abusive or to act in bad faith.

I have not ceased to recognize, and to admit that their review is edited by able and discerning writers. I foresaw that Father Didon's book would seem to them in doubtful taste, and that they would regard the eloquent Dominican's attempt to present the psychology of Jesus in accordance with the methods of Tassir and Bourget as at least imprudent. My presentiment was well founded. A few days after my article was published I received the *Études religieuses* for November, 1890, and I read therein with great pleasure a very sound article on Father Didon's *Jesus Christ,* in which the writer says: "Has he not yielded overmuch to the desire to place Jesus in his environment?" Certain phrases as to the influence of this environment sound oddly with reference to the Incarnate Word. Thus, among the details—which occupy a somewhat excessive amount of space—of the "education" which the "adolescent" Jesus must have received, and after observing that "in the public assemblies, at the synagogue (of Nazareth), he also became ac-

part, I should compare Father Didon's *Jésus-Christ* to the panorama of Jerusalem which is now being exhibited in the Champs-Elysées, and in which one sees, on the one hand, the Temple, the tower of Antonia, the palace and the gates of the city, restored according to the data of the archæologists, and, on the other hand, a traditional Calvary, like a painting in a church. But I am afraid this comparison might give an undue impression of a frivolous art, all surface, with little solidity. I am afraid also that I should not give any idea of the general effect of those incongruous pages, so strangely made up of a medley of descriptions, discussions, homilies, scraps of theology, psychology and morality, inspired now by St. Thomas Aquinas and now by Paul Bourget, in which we pass suddenly from St. Luke and St. Matthew to Joanne and Baedeker; in which the soul of Mme. de Gasparin seems to hover over the

quainted, by experience, with the poverty, the irregularities, the aberrations and the futile knowledge of the scholars of his time," we find this reflection, which is, to say the least of it, needless: "The first impressions of youth do not become effaced; *in Jesus, as in us, they assist in the comprehension of the intention, the words and the actions of maturity.*" (Vol. I, pp. 84–85). The highly poetical description of Nazareth is preceded by these even more singular lines: "We shall not understand his physiognomy nor his character if, in studying his adolescence and his early life, we neglect the external environment, the Nature in whose lap he grew up. Man is too closely bound to the soil which has seen his birth to fail to receive its imprint" (p. 86). Neither do we care to read that "the thought (of the suffering to which Jesus knew and felt himself to be doomed) spread over the whole of his nature a veil of melancholy" (Vol. I, p. 270); or that "*often,* during his life, Jesus betrayed the dejection into which he was cast by the mere sight of the cup of which he was to drink" (p. 86).—These excellent observations are from the pen of Father J. Brucker, who is, with Father P. Brucker, one of the most distinguished of the contributors to *Les Études.*

Gospel, in which we tumble suddenly from an oratorical psychology into a demonology that recalls Father Sinistrari, our friends Papus and Lermina, the school of Nancy and M. Charcot; pages whose aspect is more confused than the encumbered quays of the little city of Capharnaum, so well described by Father Didon himself.

CLEOPATRA *

PAUL STAPFER informs us, in his volume on *Shakespeare et l'antiquité,* that Cleopatra has furnished the subject of two Latin, sixteen French, six English, and at least four Italian tragedies. I should be hard put to it to name even the sixteen French tragedies; it is enough, I think, to mention Jodelle's *Cléopâtre captive* (1552), Belliard's *Les Délicieuses Amours de Marc-Antoine et de Cléopâtre* (1578), Nicolas Montreux' *Cléopâtre* (1594), Benserade's *Cléopâtre* (1636), La Thorillère's *Marc Antoine* (1677), Chapelle's *Mort de Cléopâtre* (1680), Marmontel's *Cléopâtre* (1750), Alexandre Soumet's *Cléopâtre* (1824) and Madame de Girardin's *Cléopâtre* (1847); we have also Victorien Sardou's *Cléopâtre,* to say nothing of *La Mort de Pompée,* by the great Corneille, in which we see Cleopatra, virtuous, aspiring to Cæsar's hand, but undertaking, out of generosity, the defence of the leader vanquished at Pharsala. Her confidant, Charmian, informed of these noble sentiments, replies:

L'amour, certes, sur vous a bien peu de puissance.†

To which Cleopatra responds:

Les princes ont cela de leur haute naissance.‡

* Apropos of the play by MM. Victorien Sardou and Moreau.—See Henry Houssaye; *Cléopâtre,* in his *Aspasie, Cléopâtre, Théodora,* 1 vol. † "Love, sure, o'er you has very little power." ‡ Princes are made so: 'tis their lofty birth.

At first sight one cannot imagine how Corneille could have written anything so ridiculous. But we perceive, if we consider the matter, that it was simply because he had a sublime genius. Without being, like Shakespeare, an infallible diviner of souls, our ancient poet was not wholly without discernment; he knew well enough in his own mind that Cleopatra had never spoken or thought in this way; but it pleased him to beautify her, to make her worthy of the tragic scene, to make her conform to the conventions prescribed by Aristotle, and above all to accommodate her to his own taste, which was a noble one. He was full of fine maxims. Lofty sentiments cost him but little; we can see only too plainly that the worthy man found them in his inkpot. It is very difficult to-day to put ourselves into the state of mind that was his when he was writing a tragedy in his little room, between two trials, for, an advocate and a Norman, he loved to plead in court. The pomp of this world, the pomp of the flesh, filled him with profound respect. He had ideas concerning princesses which are not in strict agreement with physiology. Shakespeare had another genius; his Cleopatra is alive. M. Victorien Sardou admires Corneille enormously, and not without reason; for he is, after all, the great Corneille. He has lately professed his admiration once again in a public letter, in which, while insisting that he recognizes the genius of the immortal Will, he considers that the place occupied by the creator of *Hamlet* in one of our public thoroughfares would be better filled by the author of *Polyeucte*. True, the bronze figure of Corneille would look well in Paris, and all those who follow the cult of our national glories would salute with respect his severe and even some-

what forbidding countenance. As for Shakespeare, he is the poet of humanity. His place is wherever there are men capable of perceiving the beautiful and the true. He is, like Homer, above the nations. M. Victorien Sardou cannot complain if he finds him on the Boulevard Haussmann. He can only be annoyed that the sculptor has given him such atrocious legs.

I know M. Victorien Sardou. I know how artistic is his taste, and how uncomely forms offend it. So unlovely a figure must be disagreeable to his sight. I suffer from it myself whenever I pass along this sumptuous and monotonous boulevard. And it has more than once occurred to me to pity the English breeches-maker who has his shop behind this statue, reflecting that his professional knowledge, the knowledge of a specialist, must make him peculiarly sensible of the deformity with which his illustrious compatriot has been gratuitously afflicted by an unskilful sculptor.

Here, assuredly, is a badly clothed Shakespeare. But M. Victorien Sardou has written his letter expressly to deny that he has ever undervalued Shakespeare. It had been said that he had declared that Shakespeare had no talent. He never said such a thing. It would have been a stupid thing to say, and those who have conversed with M. Sardou know that he does not say stupid things. His mind is of the richest, the most refined. His head is a warehouse of curiosities, a picture-gallery, a museum, an international library. He is interested in life, in manners, in usages, in the peculiarities of time and place. I do not know his Cleopatra, but I am sure it will be based upon historical data, and that there will be no lack in it of those intimacies, those pecu-

liarities, those individual touches that make the mysterious past live again before us.

It is an incomparable story, that of Antony and Cleopatra; so moving, and of so voluptuous and tragic a magnificence that art can add nothing to it, not even the art of a Shakespeare. One should read it in Plutarch. Old Plutarch is a wonderful narrator. I recommend you also M. Henry Houssaye's essay; it is perspicacious and it has distinction; and it is an excellent story.

Cleopatra was not very beautiful. Neither in beauty nor in youth was she superior to the chaste Octavia from whom she took Antony for life and death. "Her beauty," says Amyot, who translates Plutarch with grace and delicacy, "her beauty alone was not so incomparable that there could not have been other women as beautiful as she; nor was it such that she incontinently ravished all those that looked upon her; but her converse, to those that frequented her, was so agreeable that it was impossible to avoid being captivated thereby; and with her beauty, the good grace with which she conversed and the sweetness and gentleness of her disposition, which gave a fragrance to all that she said or did, was a thorn that pierced to the quick; and it was, apart from this, a great pleasure to hear merely the sound of her voice and her manner of utterance, for her tongue was as an instrument of music of many stops and registers, which she employed readily in any language that it pleased her to speak; so that she seldom spoke with barbarous peoples through an interpreter but replied to them herself, or at least to the greater number of them, as the Egyptians, Arabs, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Syrians, Medes and Parthians, and to many others

whose tongues she had learned." She had a cultivated mind after the fashion of the Alexandrines. She received from Antony, as an agreeable present, the library of Pergamus, containing two hundred thousand volumes. She was not a monster, save in the inflated imagination of the poets who were friendly to Augustus. They have declared that she used to prostitute herself to slaves. They knew nothing about the matter. People gave her as lovers Cneius Pompey, Cæsar, Dellius, Antony and Herod, King of the Jews, who was a very handsome man. But nothing is certain, excepting her relations with Cæsar and Antony. The rest is not proved, and the adventure of Herod has in particular all the appearance of a tale by Flavius Josephus. Cleopatra was a dangerous woman. And one may think of her what Heinrich Heine's old professor thought. "My old professor," said Heine, "had no love for Cleopatra; he expressly bade us observe that in surrendering himself to this woman Antony ruined his whole public career, brought private troubles upon himself and finally fell upon disaster." Nothing is truer. She ruined Antony and contributed perhaps to the ruin of Cæsar. The old professor was right. It is not perhaps enough to call her, with Propertius, the courtesan queen, *meretrix regina*. These Romans hated the Egyptian woman: she had made them afraid. Horace and Propertius assert that Rome trembled before the battle of Actium. Cleopatra dead, there were great rejoicings in the Eternal City. "Now is the time to drink! It was not permissible to touch the Cæcuban in the ancestral cellar when a queen was preparing the wild ruin of the Capitol and the funeral obsequies of the Empire. She dared to oppose to our Jupiter

the dog-nosed barking Anubis and to smother the Roman trumpet with the shrill sounds of the Egyptian sistrum. She longed to pitch her tents on the Capitol, amid the images and trophies of Marius!" At last the monster was dead. Now was the time for drinking, dancing, and offering savoury meats to the gods!

And it was a woman, a little woman, who had made the Senate and the Roman people tremble. When we say that she was little we do not know anything about the matter. We imagine that she was little from a few vague indications. To escape the machinations of the eunuch Pothinus she had herself carried to Cæsar in a sack. It was one of those great bags of coarse material, dyed in several colours, which travellers used for packing their mattresses and blankets. She emerged from it before the eyes of the delighted Roman. It seems to us that being slender and dainty she was all the more graceful, and that what a woman needs in order that she may please on emerging from a sack is not the stature of a goddess. M. Gérome has represented this scene in one of his most charming anecdotal pictures, and I seem to remember that his Cleopatra was very small and dainty. M. Gérome is noted for the abundance and the careful selection of his documents; but in this case he abandoned himself to his inspiration. We have no authentic portrait of Cleopatra, and the queen's face has not left the slightest reflection on the wide earth on which she caused so much sorrow and misfortune. Cleopatra is represented several times, it is true, with her son, Ptolemy Cæsarion, on the bas-reliefs of the temple of Denderah. But these are the hieratic figures of traditional art whose type, fixed long

beforehand, scarcely afforded room for the imitation of nature. In the goddess Hathor, in the goddess Isis with plaited hair, upright, rigid, the tunic as though glued to the body, how shall we recognize the wild lover who with Antony resorted by night to the lowest quarters of Rhakotis and mingled in the brawls of drunken sailors? As for the pretty cast which one often sees in the studios, M. Houssaye warns us not to seek in this the profile of the fair descendant of Lagus. "This bas-relief," he tells us, "discovered, I believe, in 1802, bore no inscription. An Egyptologist amused himself by engraving upon it the cartouche of Cleopatra; since when it is everywhere sold as the authentic image of the last Queen of Egypt."

This imposition reminds me of a delusion of a somewhat later date. About 1806 an Italian exhibited in Paris, in an unfurnished flat in the Rue Jacob, some Egyptian and Roman antiquities and an encaustic painting, of poor design and mediocre style, representing a woman, handsome enough, the face full, with a serpent biting her breast. The Italian swore by the Virgin and the saints that this was the authentic portrait of Cleopatra, the same that was borne through Rome before the triumphal car of Octavius. This man had a truly excessive enthusiasm for antiquities. He used to bound to and fro like a tiger in front of this painting; he would gaze at it with a gloomy eye and kiss his hand to it. "How beautiful she is!" he used to cry. He had come to Paris to sell the picture; he howled hideously and tore his hair when he was told that it was really a sorry piece of painting, the work of an academician of Rome or Venice, who flourished about 1800 or 1810. Yet this was the truth.

There are medals of Cleopatra; the numismatists admit fifteen of various types. They are for the most part poorly engraved. All represent Cleopatra with hard, heavy features and a very long nose. Pascal's profound remark will be remembered: "If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter the whole face of the earth would have been different." This nose was disproportionately long if we believe the medals; but we do not believe them. It is useless to set before us all the show-cases of the British Museum and Vienna; we say that this is one of those illusions that one reads of in fairy tales, in which all the noses of all the portraits are lengthened simultaneously; and we care nothing for numismatics, which cares nothing for us. The face which made Cæsar forget the empire of the world was not spoiled by a ridiculous nose.

It is certain that Cæsar loved Cleopatra. The divine Julius was over fifty years of age. He had exhausted all the glory and all the pleasures and had extracted from life all that it has to give in the way of violent emotions and excessive joys. His refined features had assumed the peaceful pallor of marble. It would seem that such a man could henceforth live only by and in his intellect. Yet, whatever M. Mommsen may say, he loved the Egyptian woman even to madness. For it was madness to bring her to Rome, and a greater madness to erect in the temple of Venus a statue to the divinity of Cleopatra.

In Rome the descendant of Lagus dwelt with her son and her suite in Cæsar's villa and gardens, which latter spread along the right bank of the Tiber. The dictator lived in one of the public buildings on the Via Sacra, but he paid frequent visits to the villa, which was also the meeting-place of his friends. It

was there that Mark Antony saw Cleopatra for the first time. There, too, she received Atticus, and Cicero, who was reconciled with Cæsar. Cicero was a great lover of books and antiquities.

Such treasures were rare in Rome, but abundant in Alexandria. Cicero asked Cleopatra to procure for him some manuscripts and some vases. She readily promised to do so, and entrusted one of her officers, by name Ammonius, with the commission. But the books did not arrive, and in consequence the orator bore a grudge against the queen. During this Roman period Cleopatra appears to us under an unexpected aspect. Discreet, peaceable, having banished all Asiatic luxury, wholly occupied with the things of the mind, it is a beautiful Greek who converses with Cicero under the pines. The dagger of Brutus banished at a stroke this enchantment of the villa on the Tiber. Cæsar assassinated, Cleopatra fled, amid the bloody scenes of those days of parricide, and returned to Egypt.

Then it was that the maddest and most terrible of love-stories began: the romance of Antony and Cleopatra.

II

Sarah Bernhardt has shown us Cleopatra—and with what magic, what charm!—with the features of an Egyptian. But she was a Greek: she was Greek by birth and by genius. She grew to womanhood in an atmosphere of Hellenic manners and arts; and she had the grace, the eloquence, the refined familiarity, the ingenious audacity of her race. Neither the gods of Egypt nor the monsters of Africa ever invaded her laughing soul. Never did

she drowse in the gloomy majesty of the Oriental queens. She was a Greek, too, in her exquisite taste and her wonderful pliability. All the while she was living in Rome she observed all the conventions, and when, after her death, the friends of Augustus insulted her memory with Latin brutality, they could not reproach her with anything connected with her sojourn in Cæsar's villa. She had been perfect in her behaviour under the pines and terebinths of the gardens by the Tiber.

She was a Greek, but she was a queen; a queen, and therefore above the measure and harmony, above that medium state which was always desired by the Greeks, and which found its way into Latin poetry only as a literary affectation, a servile imitation. She was a queen and an Eastern queen, therefore a monster; and she was punished for this by the Nemesis of the gods whom the Greeks set above Zeus himself, because it is, in actual fact, the sense of the real and the possible, the understanding of the necessities of human life. Fashioned for the secret arts of desire and love, a lover and a queen, she was at once a child of nature and a monster, a Chloë who was by no means a shepherdess.

That the fate of the world should hang upon the motions of an exquisite body, the sigh of a charming mouth, is something that is not Greek, something that the Nemesis of the gods will not allow. The death of the last of the Lagidæ expiated the crime of Alexander the Macedonian, that half-barbarian Greek, that immoderate Greek, who, an intoxicated soldier, opened up the cruel and lascivious East for Hellenism. It was not that the exquisite Cleopatra herself was lacking in the sense of measure and harmony. She even retained the instinct for the true,

the beautiful and the possible, as far as her omnipotence would allow, and the hereditary crime of her house, and the madness of the world about her, plunged into that voluptuous and flagitious orgy in which Hellenism rubbed elbows with barbarism. Her singular misfortune, her terrible glory was to be charming, being a sovereign; to be Lesbia, Delia or Leuconoë, and to be unable to open her adorable arms without kindling war.

The morals of a daughter of Lagus were doubtless elastic, and the gentle antiquaries have some difficulty in measuring them with the Greek and Latin texts which they study so methodically. For my part, I do not ask what Cleopatra regarded as permissible or forbidden. I think she considered that a great many things were permitted to her. I shall imitate, in his wisdom, M. Henry Houssaye, who does not think it possible to make a list of the queen's lovers. To compile a list of this sort with any confidence one must be a pig-headed librarian, like the ancient Ælian or the worthy Peignot, who believed more than is reasonable in the authority of the texts. One thing is certain; that when Antony loved her with a tempestuous love she met his thunder with the lightning of a gaze that nothing had dimmed, and the ardour of a body that debauchery had not wearied. We know that she loved the soldier of Pharsala and Philippi; we know that she loved him even unto death. The rest is hidden for ever, as are the obscure travaillings of so many thousands of millions of creatures who are born, suffer and die on this planet; as are the sorrows of so many lovers who, in the infinite course of the ages, serve or betray love without even leaving, as did the young girl of Pompeii, the imprint of their breast in the ashes.

Before Antony came it would seem that this intelligent, ambitious, proud and vindictive woman had been more queen than lover. A great builder, like the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies, she filled Alexandria with magnificent monuments.* She held her own firmly against the intrigues of the eunuchs and against domestic and popular sedition; and when she had been driven out of the city and her palace she re-entered them by an audacious ruse. She succeeded in holding the rights of Rome over her empire in suspense, and if it is true that in so doing she employed her beauty and her charm we must remember that this beauty was not incomparable, and that this charm, whose might was felt by Cæsar, would not have sufficed without a great deal of intelligence and political ability. This charm, skilfully wielded, won her Antony after Cæsar. But this time she found herself the associate of a soldier who was doomed to possess the world or to have not a stone whereon to lay his head. The game was a great one, and a doubtful. To play it well a cool head was needful. Mark Antony had never displayed much coolness. Cleopatra robbed him of the little that he possessed; she drove him absolutely mad; she became as crazed as he; and together they struggled for life and empire in the lucid intervals of that madness which the Greeks knew well, since they have described it as a malady of the senses and the soul, comparable to the divine madness by the violence of its attacks and the profundity of its melancholy.

The first mistake of Antony and Cleopatra was to despise their enemy, that sickly, stammering,

* See a note by M. Maspero in M. Houssaye's work already cited.

cowardly, cruel young man, who was colder and more unfeeling, when he was shaving his first beard, than the most serious politicians, men who had grown grey in public life. Fighting was unavoidable; and it was the war of the fox and the lion. The lion had the lion's share: all the provinces of the East as far as Illyria, and the little fox, the cunning boy, Octavius, had only Italy, ruined and distracted, and Spain, Gaul, Sicily, and Africa in arms against him. So many spears turned against a coward! But the coward was patiently ambitious; that is, he was the greatest force in the world.

Mark Antony, in the prime of life, was the first soldier of the Empire since the death of Cæsar. He had, to begin with, crushed the rebellious Jews. He had supported the great Julius in Gaul, in Upper Italy, in Illyria. He commanded the right wing of the Cæsarians at Pharsala. Defeated at Modena, he had won the decisive victory of Philippi. Although he had neither the prudence nor the clear vision of Cæsar, Cæsar regarded him as his ablest lieutenant. Alone and left to himself, Antony erred in his method. One evening, when we were reading together, in Plutarch, the picturesque narrative of the war against the Parthians, an artillery officer of great learning, Captain Marin, commenting on the ancient text, was able without difficulty to show us Antony's defects, the incoherence of his plan, and the incurable frivolity of a leader who, having made war with Cæsar, allowed himself to be surprised by the enemy. None the less, Antony had some of the great qualities of a soldier. He had the essential of military psychology, a knowledge of the soldier's mentality. He made men love him and follow him. He was impetuous, inspiring, irresistible. He in-

spired in his men the confidence which he felt in himself. A great-hearted, cheerful man, he communicated to others that gaiety which makes men forget suffering and danger and gives to each the strength of two. He drank and ate with them; he kept them laughing with his jests. The legionaries worshipped him. Antony is not to be judged by the Philippics which Cicero pronounced against him; Cicero was an advocate, and was, in politics, a moderate of the most violent kind. Apart from that he was an honest man and a great man of letters. Antony was not the coarse soldier, the insolent warrior, I was about to say the swashbuckler, whom the orator shows us. He had wit, precisely in the sense in which we understand the word to-day; verbal wit, for as regards his conduct he was witless always, and Cleopatra did not help him. Far from being an uncultivated man, he had studied rhetoric in Greece. His speech had not the elegant correctness of Cæsar's; it was full of metaphors and exaggerations. His was what we should call to-day a romantic eloquence. He loved, says Plutarch, the Asiatic style, which was then much in request, and which corresponded with his luxurious way of life, a life full of ostentation and subject to alarming inequalities.

Plutarch says truly that in all things Antony had an insane love of the Asiatic style and Oriental pomp. His low forehead and thick beard, his virile, powerful figure gave him a certain look of the statues of the fabulous Hercules, from whom he claimed descent; but it was Bacchus, the Indian Bacchus, whom he loved to recall by his sumptuous retinue and his chariots drawn by lions. He entered Ephesus preceded by women dressed as Bacchantes and

youths bearing the fawn skin of Pans and satyrs. The whole city was full of ivy-crowned thyrsi; one heard only the sound of flutes and Pan-pipes and the cries that saluted the new Bacchus, a gentle and beneficent god.

It is true that the large humanity of Cæsar was always foreign to the colleague of Octavius and Lepidus. Antony had his share of the cruel ferocity common to the Romans of that brutal period. But he never showed himself, like Octavius, coldly cruel. He was liberal, magnificent and capable of delicate and generous feeling. In Greece, as his enemies admit, he dispensed justice with great humanity and showed himself eager to be spoken of as the friend of the Greeks, and still more of the Athenians. After the victory of Philippi he laid his own cuirass over the bleeding corpse of Brutus, in order to do honour, as a soldier, to the funeral rites of the vanquished. When in those gloomy days Ahenobarbus, his old comrade, abandoned him on the eve of battle, in order to go over to Octavius, he sent the man who had so long been his friend his equipment and all that belonged to him; and it is said that Ahenobarbus, overwhelmed by this generosity, died of grief and shame.

Antony was the slave of women. His ostentatious love for the courtesan Cytheris filled the Romans with indignation. The harsh and violent Fulvia made this Hercules, this Indian Bacchus, tremble. Later he showed himself susceptible to the chaste beauty of Octavia. He loved them with violence and at the same time he loved them with wit, which is infinitely rarer. "He displayed," says Plutarch, "grace and gaiety in his amours." This is the man who summoned Cleopatra

before his tribunal at Tarsus. He it was who was the Asiatic and the Oriental. Without being capable of great projects steadily pursued, he dreamed vaguely of the empire of the East with some vast barbaric city for his capital. He loved the East, with its treasures, its monsters, its luxurious pleasures, its splendours, its perfume, its poetry. Then Cleopatra appeared. He saw her, no doubt, for the second time, for he must have known her in Rome; but there she was discreet, reserved, austere, like a Roman lady. Now it was the Queen of Egypt who appeared before him in the hieratic pomp of a new Isis. He adored the Greek adorned as an idol.

Cleopatra's galley upon the Cydnus has remained the image of splendid voluptuousness.

Yesterday we beheld it in the illusion of the theatre.* Reclining beneath the purple curtains we saw the delightful actress who has made the serpent of the Nile live again in her own person. Nevertheless, for me the dazzling vision of the scene does not date from yesterday; nor from the day when I heard M. José Maria de Heredia recite his brilliant and perfumed sonnet on the Cydnus:

Sous l'azur triomphal, au soleil qui flamboie,
La trirème d'argent blanchit le fleuve noir,
Et son sillage y laisse un parfum d'encensoir,
Avec des chants de flûte et des frissons de soie.

A la proue éclatante où l'épervier s'éploie,
Hors de son dais royal se penchant pour mieux voir,
Cléopâtre, debout dans la splendeur du soir,
Semble un grand oiseau d'or qui guette au loin sa proie.

* These two articles were written, one before and one after the first performance of MM. Sardou and Moreau's tragedy at the Porte Saint-Martin.

Voici Tarse où l'attend le guerrier désarmé;
Et la brune Lagide ouvre dans l'air charmé
Ses bras d'ambre où la pourpre a mis ses reflets roses;

Et ses yeux n'ont pas vu, présages de son sort,
Auprès d'elle, effeuillant sur l'eau sombre des roses,
Les deux enfants divins, le Désir et la Mort.*

My vision dates yet farther back; back to those years of adolescence and early youth whose memory (I am aware of it) I am too much inclined to recall. It was at college, the year when I was studying rhetoric, in the winter, on a Friday, during the eleven-o'clock meal. I had never felt more painfully the vulgarities and inelegancies of life; a sickening smell of lukewarm fried fish filled the refectory; a cold draught bit at one's feet through damp shoes; the walls were oozing, and one saw, beyond the bars of the windows, a fine rain falling from the grey sky. The pupils, sitting at tables of black, greasy marble, were making a distressing noise with their forks, while one of our comrades, seated in a high chair in the middle of the great hall, was reading, according to custom, a passage from Rollin's *History of*

*Beneath the triumphant azure, in the blazing sun,—The silver trireme whitens the black stream,—And its wake leaves thereon a perfume of incense,—With songs and flutes and the shiver of silk.

At the glittering prow where the falcon preens himself,—Leaning out of her royal daïs the better to see,—Cleopatra, erect in the splendour of the evening—Seems a great golden bird that watches for its prey afar.

Here is Tarsus where waits the unweaponed warrior;—And the brown Lagidæan opens in the enchanted air—Her amber-hued arms on which the purple has shed rosy lights;

And her eyes have not seen the presages of her Fate—Close beside her, strewing roses on the dark water,—The two divine children, Desire and Death.

Antiquity. I gazed, without eating, at my badly-washed plate, my metal mug, at the bottom of which abundant use had deposited something like wood-mould; and I followed with my eyes the servants, who were serving us with great dishes of stewed prunes, into whose juice their thumbs were dipping. Everything disgusted me. Amid the clattering of plates and forks the voice of the reader reached my ear at intervals. Suddenly I heard the name of Cleopatra and a few fragments of delightful phrases: *She was about to appear before Antony at an age when women unite with the full flower of their beauty the full power of their mind. . . . Her person more puissant than any adornment. . . . She entered the Cydnus. . . . The poop of her vessel was all glittering with gold, the oars were of silver.* Then came the caressing names of *flutes*, of *perfumes*, of *Nereïds*, of *Loves*. And a delightful vision filled my eyes. My blood pulsed in my temples as it does in the presence of glory or beauty. I fell into a profound ecstasy. The prefect of studies, who was an ugly and insulting person, aroused me suddenly by giving me an imposition for not rising at the signal. But in spite of that vulgar pedant, I had seen Cleopatra!

The worthy Plutarch must have been right: Mark Antony was pleasant and joyous in his loves. It was he who devised the follies of their inimitable life, the disguises at night, the fishing expeditions on the Nile, the wonderful banquets. Yes, it was he who was the Oriental, the Egyptian. She, the incomparable lover, wanted only that which he devised. And, fearing only to lose him, she assumed the tastes and the garments of a soldier in order to be always at his side. "She drank with him, she hunted with

him, she attended manœuvres with him." * Plutarch tells us: "They formed a society known as the Amimetobiæ; and they entertained one another mutually every day." Eight boars were always on the spit, and at any hour of the day there was always one just ready for the table. The inimitable life was interrupted by the Bellum Perusinum and the marriage of Antony and Octavia. It was resumed more ardently and more frantically than ever after three years of absence.

Then came the war: Actium, and Cleopatra's sudden flight in the midst of the battle; that still inexplicable flight, which Admiral Jurien de la Gravière regards as a skilful manœuvre and which M. Sardou renders so dramatic when he, on the contrary, shows us the amorous queen consummating by her flight the defeat and the shame of her lover in order to keep him wholly for herself. So the Admiral will have it that Cleopatra was an excellent sailor, and the dramatist makes her extremely pathetic; both of them are in love with her, especially the sailor. I too have loved her since my college days. But I am rather inclined to believe that she ran away, seized by a mad panic.

Antony sees that the galley with the purple sails, the *Antoniad,* which bears Cleopatra, is fleeing; he pursues it, abandoning the battle by an astonishing act of cowardice, which, in such a soldier, becomes heroic; he hails the *Antoniad,* boards her, and goes to sit alone at the prow, his head in his hands. At Alexandria, Antony, disgraced and ruined, still displays a most fantastic humour; he builds himself, on a jetty running out to sea, a cabin, which he calls his Timonium, where he intends to live alone like

* H. Houssaye, *loc. cit.,* p. 120.

Timon of Athens. He announces himself to be a misanthrope, and his misanthropy is picturesque and romantic: the misanthropy of passion. Then his cabin and his solitude weary him. He sees the queen again and forms, with her, a society more melancholy but no less luxurious than that of the Inimitables: the company of those that wish to die together, the Synapothanumenoi. A great artist, this Antony!

That the queen loved him unto death and beyond death is not to be doubted. But that she nevertheless attempted to seduce Octavius is also not to be doubted; and this proves only that Cleopatra was not sure. We had, indeed, some suspicion of the kind. If she could not make the cold Octavius love her at least she was able to deceive that suspicious person. She wished to make him believe that she wished to live; but she was determined to kill herself. She died royally. When Octavius' soldiers entered her chamber they found her clad in the raiment of a queen and a goddess, lying lifeless upon a golden bed. Iras, one of her women, lay dead at her feet. The other, Charmian, scarcely able to stand, was settling the diadem upon her head with a faltering hand. One of the soldiers cried angrily:

"Charmian, is this well done?"

"It is well done," she replied, "and fitting for a princess descended of so many royal kings."

And she fell dead at the foot of the bed.

This scene is so nobly tragic that one cannot think of it without a thrill of admiration. We must thank her who prepared the spectacle and bequeathed the memory of it to artists and poets. Cleopatra was beloved in Alexandria, and her statues were not

overthrown after her death. She cannot therefore have been as wicked as her enemies have declared. But we must not forget that beauty is one of the virtues of this world.

JUDITH GAUTIER *

I

UDITH GAUTIER is the poet's daughter. In the little house in the Rue de Longchamp where, as they say of the princesses of the fairy-tales, she grew each day in wisdom and beauty, Judith learned even in childhood to appreciate the most exquisite, the rarest, the strangest forms of art. Her father, in speech as in writing, was an incomparable assembler of wonderful things. In the midst of familiar conversation he would, without thinking, perform magical evocations. This little house, bathed in winter by the fogs of the Seine and the mists of the Bois, became filled, at the sound of the master's voice, by all the poetry of the East of our dreams.

I remember seeing there, one evening, on one of the shelves in the library, the golden mask of an Egyptian mummy, gleaming in the shadow, and I shall never forget the impression of harmony which this sacred countenance gave me, with its long, open eyes, in the study of the poet who wrote the *Roman de la momie,* with its incomparable prologue. It was there that the child Judith Gautier fed upon poetry and learned to love exotic beauty. That her artistic education might be complete, nothing was lacking,

* *La Conquête de Paradis,* by Judith Gautier. (*Bibliothèque des romans historiques.*) Armand Colin, 1 vol.

save perhaps the commonplace and the usual.

And the poet's daughter was so wonderfully gifted that she wrote, before she was twenty, a book of perfect beauty, whose style shines with an unsullied radiance. Connoisseurs will know that I am speaking of the *Livre de jade,* a collection of poems in prose, inspired, if we are to believe the author, by the lyric poetry of China. Judith Gautier learned Chinese at an age when little girls are commonly learning nothing more than the piano, crochet-work and sacred history. I doubt, however, whether she found in Thou-Lou, Teké-Tsi or Li-Taï-Pé all the details of the delicate pictures contained in the *Livre de jade;* I doubt whether the poets of the *pays de la porcelaine* were familiar, before she came, with the grace, the bloom that will charm you in each one of these finished fragments, which may perhaps be compared with the prose poems of Aloysius Bertrand and Charles Baudelaire: for example, in the little picture of *The Emperor:*

THE EMPEROR.

On a new gold throne the Son of Heaven, resplendent with gems, is seated amid his mandarins; he is like a sun surrounded by planets.

The mandarins talk gravely of grave things; but the Emperor's thoughts have fled through the open window.

In her porcelain pavilion, like a glistening flower surrounded by foliage, the Empress is seated amid her women.

She is thinking that her Beloved is remaining overlong in the council. and in her tedium she flutters her fan.

A whiff of perfume caresses the Emperor's face.

"My beloved, with a stroke of her fan, sends me the fragrance of her breath." And the Emperor, blazing with gems, directs his steps toward the porcelain pavilion, leaving the astonished mandarins to gaze at one another in silence.

From this moment Judith Gautier had discovered her medium; she had a style of her own, a calm,

sure style, rich and placid, like that of Théophile Gautier: less robust, less copious, but far more fluid, and lighter.

She had her style because she had her world of ideas and dreams. This world was the Far East: not as the travellers describe it, even when they are, like Loti, poets, but as it created itself in the mind of a young girl, a silent mind, a deep mine, as it were, in which the diamond shapes itself in the darkness. She was never fully conscious of herself, this divine child! Gautier, who admired her with all his heart, used to say, jestingly: "Her brain is in a plate." Judith Gautier had invented a vast Orient in which to house her dreams. And this indeed is genius!

Without being a great critic of self, she has some notion of what she is doing, if it is true, as they say, that she has always shown the greatest dislike of the idea of travelling in the East. She has not seen China and Japan; she has done better; she has dreamed them and has peopled them with the charming children of her mind and her love.

Her first novel, I should say her first poem (for they are truly poems) is *Le Dragon impérial,* a book all embroidered with silk and gold, written in a style of limpid brilliance. I am not speaking of the descriptions, which are wonderful. But the principal figure, which stands out against a background of unimaginable richness, has already those qualities of fierce pride, youthful heroism and fantastic chivalry which Judith Gautier has the secret of impressing upon her chief creations, and which makes them so original. The young woman's imagination, in this first work of hers, is cruel and violent, but she has

already, and finally, achieved the proud chastity and romantic purity that do her honour.

Shortly after *Le Dragon impérial* she published *L'Usurpateur,* which disappeared as soon as published, in a great publisher's bankruptcy. The public scarcely heard of it. Yet it is a sheer wonder; it is Mme. Judith Gautier's masterpiece, and one of the masterpieces of the French language. It reappeared later under a title more in harmony with the enchanting splendour of the book: it is now called *La Sœur du Soliel.* I know nothing to be compared with these pages, drenched with light and joy, in which all shapes are rare and beautiful, and all sentiments proud or tender; in which the cruelty of the yellow man is half effaced by the glory of that heroic age when Nippon had its chivalry and the flower of its warriors were yet on earth. It is months since I read *La Sœur du Soleil,* or rather *L'Usurpateur,* for I still see this title on the green cover of the original edition, which was adorned by a drawing of the author's. It is years even, yet I can quote from memory, without fear of mistakes, a whole sentence from this book, a sentence such as one finds in Chateaubriand or Flaubert, which almost makes one feel that French prose, in the hands of a great artist, is more beautiful than the most beautiful verse. Here is this sentence, detached from all context:

"The sky is like a great rose-leaf. It is the last petal of the day that is falling, of the day that is falling into the past, but whose memory our soul will retain, as that of a day of joy and peace, it may be, the last."

I have not the book at hand. I am sorry, less because I might collate these lines, whose feeling is at once so gracious and so melancholy, than because it seems to me that not to have at one's elbow such a

book as *La Sœur du Soleil* is to be deprived of one of the delicate joys of life.

I must mention, together with these two books, *Iskender,* which is the legendary history of Alexander according to the traditions of Persia. These three books are the three most beautiful gems of this queen of the imagination. Perhaps one would rather that Madame Judith Gautier's magnificent imagination had never (like Baudelaire's woman of Malabar) ventured into our grey, damp clime, which is not adapted to its rare beauty. The remark has been made a hundred times: this dancing-girl, who but now, upon the stage, gave her every movement an airy grace, a rhythm, an artistic joy that made it a dream of beauty, that was poetry itself; see her now in the street: she walks heavily, and her bearing has nothing to distinguish it from the obscure crowd. Where the poetess of *Le Dragon impérial* and *Iskender* leaves the fairyland of the East which she has dreamed, of the East in which she has left her soul, and enters the realities of modern life, she loses her divine grace in our foggy atmosphere. She is still a rare and skilful story-teller, but the poetry, the charm are gone. *Lucienne* and *Isoline,* despite all their merit, are far from equal to *La Sœur du Soleil* and that lovely *Mardiande de sourires* which one was so glad to admire at the Odéon.

II

But in *La Conquête du Paradis* we find once more that pure and heroic imagination, that vaguely noble and divinely child-like quality which constitutes the charm of Judith Gautier's romances. I am speaking of *La Conquête du Paradis,* which M. Armand Colin

has just published in his *Bibliothèque des romans historiques,* as a new book. I know the book was published some years ago; but it has been so far modified and enlarged in this last edition that we may say that it has only to-day assumed its perfect form.

It is a historical novel, for the action takes us back to the capture of Madras in 1746, to the quarrels of Dupleix and La Bourdonnais, the victorious defence of Pondicherry against the British fleet and army, and the acquisition for France, by the adroit Dupleix, of 560 miles of coast-line between Krishna and Cape Comorin. It is a historical novel, for its hero is that Charles Joseph Patissier, Marquis de Bussy-Castelnau, who defended Pondicherry with a courage equal to his intelligence, and it is so far a novel founded upon history that the author, having told us of the wonderful capture of Gengi, gives herself the patriotic pleasure of writing, in a footnote, at the risk of disturbing the harmony of her fiction: "It is needless to remark that the recital of this extraordinary, almost incredible feat of arms is word for word historical; it is only the strict truth."

Without a doubt, it is a historical novel. Fundamentally Madame Judith Gautier understands history after the fashion of the elder Dumas, and I do not say that this is a bad fashion for a novelist. She loves messages mysteriously brought in the midst of rejoicings which suddenly turn the joyous nights into armed vigils. She loves violent sword-play, and lovers' meetings when they are fraught with great danger. Her Bussy is a man of delightful valour. One does not understand how it is that he is not killed a thousand times. He escapes by a

miracle from dangers of which the mere idea makes one shudder, and this is as it should be in a cloak-and-sword romance. This young Bussy is a younger son, who, although he hails from Soissons, is not second in adventurous courage to any cadet of Gascony, not even to d'Artagnan himself.

He loves Ourvaci, the queen of Bangalore, who is one of those dream-figures that Madame Judith excels in painting. In her strange magnificence and her exotic grace, in her wild fury and her heroic tenderness, Ourvaci, the divine Ourvaci, could have been conceived only by the daughter of Théophile Gautier. Whether she goes by on horseback like a divine huntress and amazon, or whether, on the terrace of her palace, she emerges from a cloud of tame doves and reveals herself wrapped in golden gauze, or whether, in her ivory chamber, lying on her cushions, clad in veils that envelop her youthful limbs like a mist, she offers the audacious lover a single kiss for which he will pay with his life, Ourvaci appears (it is Judith Gautier herself who speaks) like "the incarnation of that splendid and treacherous Hindostan in which the flowers, too strongly perfumed, destroy the reason and sometimes kill."

Love has not the same features in all countries. For M. de Bussy, who is a captain of volunteers, it was doubtless the white, winged boy of the great French parks; the little archer sung by Anacreon and the Abbé de Chaulieu. Queen Ourvaci had in her gardens an image of the god of love, and this image was much more barbaric and much more Hindu than Bussy could have imagined. This, no doubt, is why they had so much difficulty in understanding one another, and why they nearly killed

themselves a score of times before they came to love one another. It was the result of prejudice. There is nothing which, in all times and all lands, is so subject to prejudice as love. This is how Madame Judith Gautier describes the god of love as he stood in the gardens of the queen of Bangalore:

"The purple asoka, which seemed as though covered with pearls of coral, made a canopy over the god of love. He appeared, in marble, painted and gilded, riding astride a giant parrot, and smiling under his cleft mitre, bending his bow, made of sugar-cane, with a string of golden bees. The fine arrows with which he wounds each sense protruded from the quiver, each armed with a different flower; on the arrow that is aimed at the eyes was the royal champak, so beautiful that it dazzles the sight; on that destined for the hearing was the flower of the mango, beloved of the singing-birds; for the scent there was the ketaka, whose perfume intoxicates; for the touch the kesara, with petals silky as a young girl's cheek; for the taste the bilva, which bears a fruit fragrant as a kiss.

Near Love one saw his companion, Spring, and before him, kneeling, his two consorts, Rati, Delight, and Prîti, Affection.

I should have liked to infuse more order and lucidity into these mere notes upon one of the most original talents of contemporary literature. I should have liked at least to show you the spectacle—sufficiently unusual, and worthy of consideration—of a woman who is absolutely beautiful and made to charm, careless of her beauty, fleeing the world, caring only for work and solitude.

That vague, wild, disdainful quality which one divines in all that she writes is also to be found in the depth of Madame Gautier's soul. She lives from choice attended solely by her dreams, and it is true that no court could provide her with so magnificent a retinue. She has a feeling for all the arts. She is a profound musician. No one has known better than she oblivion of the hours in the indeterminate

world of musical ideas. She has written a little book on Wagner which bears witness to her long familiarity with this great genius. She has a taste and a feeling for painting. The walls of her drawing-room are covered with weird animals painted by herself, in the manner of the Japanese kakemonos, which reveal her child-like love of images and her mystical understanding of nature.

As for her natural talent as a sculptor, it used to astonish her friends long before she signed with the name "M. H. Bouillon" the bust of Théophile Gautier which has lately been unveiled at Tarbes. I remember seeing a small model of a clock in which Madame Judith Gautier displayed, in my opinion, a most wonderful skill in grouping figures. It was a terrestrial globe on which the twelve hours of the day and the twelve hours of the night, represented by women, were applying themselves to all the tasks of life. There were some drinking and eating, others reading or meditating, or performing some sort of work, while others were sleeping, or dreaming of love. Each of these little figures was delightfully posed, and their grouping was perfectly harmonious. I do not know what has become of this charming model, or rather I guess only too well that it no longer exists. When I saw it, its creator was already disdainfully allowing it to perish, and the little Hours were waving mutilated arms upon a globe furrowed with deep crevasses. It was the end of a world, rejected by its creator. For my part, I regret this ingenious piece of work, which was no sooner created than destroyed.

Madame Judith Gautier's almost hostile indifference, not only to her works of art, but even to her finest literary accomplishments, has already been

noted. M. Edmond de Goncourt relates that one day, in the little house in the Rue de Longchamp, he found the young Judith carving Ingres' *Angélique* out of a turnip. The fragile masterpiece perished in a few days. This was merely amusement, the play of a young fairy; but those who realize Madame Judith Gautier's contempt for fame are tempted to regard it as characteristic. The author of these magnificent books, written with such love, cares nothing for the destiny of her work. As she carved Angélique in a turnip, so she would gladly trace her noblest thoughts on the petals of the rose, in the chalice of the lily, which the wind would bear far out of human sight. She writes as Bertha used to spin, because it is the occupation that comes most naturally to her. But when the book is completed she takes no further interest in it, and remains completely indifferent to what is thought and said of it. Never, I believe, did any woman display so natural a disdain of success; never was any woman less of the woman of letters. And yet no poet ever had a better right than Théophile Gautier's daughter to say, with the shepherd of the Anthology: "I have sung for the Muses and for myself."

JEAN MORÉAS *

HE author of *Les Syrtes* and *Les Cantilènes* has published this very day, through the "bibliopole," Léon Vanier, a new collection of verse, whose appearance will be loudly celebrated in the Latin country in which M. Jean Moréas goes his way, followed, it is said, by fifty younger poets, like a young Homer leading his youthful Homerides. A café is mentioned in which of an evening the bard of symbolism teaches the rhapsodists of the future.

M. Jean Moréas was born at Athens, barely thirty-four years ago. He himself has said, in an unusual rhythm which is a favourite with him:

> Je naquis au bord d'une mer dont la couleur passe
> En douceur le saphir oriental. Des lys
> Y poussent dans le sable. . . .†

He is descended, if we may believe his biographers, from the navarch Tombazis, whom the sailors of the Archipelago still mention in their songs, and from Papadiamontopoulous, who died like a hero in Missolonghi. But by his intellectual training, and by his feeling for art, he is wholly French.

He fed his mind upon our old romances of chivalry, and it seemed as though he did not wish

* *Le Pélerin passionné,* 1 vol. in 18.

† "I was born by the shore of a sea whose colour exceeds—in tenderness the Eastern sapphire. Lilies—Grow there in the sand. . . ."

to meet the gods of ancient Greece save under the refined forms which they assumed on the banks of the Seine and the Loire, in the days when the *Pléiade* was shining. His childhood was spent in Marseilles, and he is no doubt reviving and transforming the first memories of his childhood when he paints for us, in the first poem of *Le Pélerin passionné,* a Levantine harbour, quite in the style of Vernet's marine landscapes, in which we see "tall old men at work on the feluccas, along the piers and the quays." But Marseilles, a Greek colony and a port of the Levant, was not for M. Moréas his adoptive country, his chosen home. The true home of his spirit is further north; it begins where we see blue slates beneath a soft grey sky, where rise those jewels of stone on which the Renaissance has set symbolic figures and subtle devices. M. Jean Moréas is one of the seven stars of the new *Pléiade.* I regard him as the Ronsard of symbolism.

He would fain have been its du Bellay also, and in 1885 he issued a manifesto which somewhat recalls the *Deffense et illustration de la langue françoise* of 1549. He displays in this a curiosity concerning his art, and a love of form rather than a critical or philosophical spirit. The æsthete of the school is rather that M. Charles Morice in whom I divine a certain depth although I do not always hear it, for he is cloudy. But one must always put up with a certain amount of obscurity in the symbolists; if one cannot, one should never open their books. As for M. Jean Moréas, difficult as he is in certain passages, he is certainly a poet; a poet in his own manner and a fine artist in his own fashion. His new book, *Le Pélerin passionné,* is especially deserving of mention: firstly, because here and there it

contains pleasant and even exquisite things; and, secondly, because it affords the critic an opportunity of explaining himself in respect of certain questions which are connected with the art of poetry. M. Jean Moréas and his school have rejected the rules of the old prosody. They have rid themselves of the false cæsura, which is still retained by the romantics, in their broken lines, and by the Parnassians. They reject the systematic alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes. This is not all: they employ rich rhymes when they please, and when they please content themselves with mere assonance. They permit themselves the hiatus: they often elide the *e* mute before a consonant, and finally, they write verses in all sorts of measures; verses which, as M. Félix-Fénéon has drily remarked, are "still suspect"; lines whose six and a half feet distress the ear, and lines even longer than these, in which syntax is observed with the greatest facility. The reader must excuse me for entering thus into the technique of the art; we are considering poetry, and it is well to inquire whether these novelties are successful, or permissible.

They certainly have this drawback—that they break through our habits. But this is an inconvenience common to all changes. One must put up with it when needful. If we live we must consent to see all about us changing. One can live only at this price, and if the mobility of things often depresses us, it also amuses us. Extreme conservatism is as ridiculous in art as in politics, and I do not know which is more futile at the present moment: to demand the restoration of the fiscal qualification in electoral matters, or of the cæsura in the middle of the Alexandrine.

The incessant metamorphosis of all things neither surprises nor alarms us. It is natural. The forms of art change as do the forms of life. The prosody of Boileau and the classics is dead. Why should the prosody of Victor Hugo and the romantics be eternal? Scarcely any one, that I can see, save the old lions of 1830, if there are any left, lament what is happening in poetry to-day. Only the revolutionists are amazed that there should be revolution after them.

If our prosody were subject to natural laws it would, of course, be necessary to obey those laws. But evidently it is based upon usage and not upon nature. If we examine its rules we shall see that they are arbitrary. We are not a very musical nation and we do not readily sing. The beginnings of our poetry are so barbarous and uncouth that no poet would dare to look at them if he had the misfortune to be acquainted with them. Rhyme was originally a clumsy artifice of mnemotechnics, and verse an aid to memory for people who could not read. And if you find it hard to believe that a mnemotechnical expedient has been transformed, in the course of time, into a beautiful artistic resource, it is enough to reflect that in Greek architecture a beam laid upon wooden pillars became the architrave and that either end of the framing of the roof became a marble triglyph.

When we examine the details of versification we perceive that all the prescriptions which the poets obey are recent and arbitrary. They do not last long. They would last an even shorter time were not the sense of imitation very powerful in men, and, above all, in artists. Indeed, a form of verse does not last much longer than through one genera-

tion of poets. If we examine the changes lately introduced into French verse we shall, I think, find sufficient reasons for resigning ourselves and saying: "It was inevitable." The suppression of the cæsura is only one step further upon a path which has long been followed. The broken line of our old romantics is to-day regarded as an example and is accepted by all men of letters. The prosodic reforms of 1830 are accepted by every schoolmaster capable of putting together, at random, selected passages for his classes; by the most mechanical of anthologists, the most conventional of collectors; by a Merlet, in short. Now the broken line must needs lead to the line with the shifting and multiple cæsura; that was necessarily the case. And Malherbe teaches us that we should not seek remedies for irremediable ills.

I have not much to say concerning the alternation of rhymes. This is a fairly novel obligation, which did not yet exist in its full rigour in the days of Ronsard. I confess that I am shocked when a poet fails to observe this rule by mistake; the painful impression proceeds less, perhaps, from a delicate ear than from the feeling that an irregularity has been committed which disturbs my sense of the customary. At all events, I am quite aware that I no longer feel this distress when the non-alternation is deliberate and intentional. Undeniably the effect may be agreeable. This is the opinion of M. Théodore de Banville, the most skilful of poets in the management of rhyme.

M. Moréas and his friends take certain further liberties in the matter of rhymes which may also be defended. I used of old to recite, devoutly, like a good Parnassian, the litanies of Sainte-Beuve to

Our Lady of Rhyme: rhyme, the dip of the oar, the golden bridle, the brooch of Venus, the diamond ring, the keystone of the arch. I do not deny my faith. But without apostasy I can recognize that the prosody now going out of fashion was bookish and pedantic when it demanded that the rhyme should satisfy the eye as completely as it satisfies the ear. The poet, in this case, surrenders too far to the scribe. It becomes too plain that he burns the midnight oil, that he works on paper, that he is a grammarian rather than a singer. It is the misfortune of our poetry that it is too literary, too much a written thing; this quality should not be exaggerated. And if the symbolists to some extent diminish the graphic symmetry of the rhyme I shall not blame them overmuch. And here is another question: should we blame them for permitting the hiatus when the ear permits it? No: they are only doing what the worthy Ronsard used to do. It is pitiable, when one comes to think of it, that for two hundred years the French poets should have been forbidden to say *tu as* or *tu es* in verse! This alone is a remarkable proof of the strict behaviour of the French people, of their obedience to the laws.

Must we call it a barbarous offence if M. Moréas writes:

Dieu ait pitié de mon âme!

On the contrary, who is there that does not feel that certain hiatuses please the ear? Those crystalline encounters between the vowels in such names as *Néère* or *Leuconoë*, which are really no more than pleasing hiatuses within the word—by what magic do they become unmusical when they occur between two adjacent words of a line of verse? But it is

enough to have read Ronsard to realize how the hiatus may enter into the melody of a poem. Taking them all in all, the novelties of the symbolists are rather examples of a return to ancient usages. Thus they reckon a line of five feet, *nommée Mab,* to be equivalent to four syllables, as it was of old. We shall presently consider an example. Yet they permit themselves at times, if only rarely, as in popular songs, to elide the *e* mute before a consonant, according to their taste. They say: *nommé Mab.* The licence is great, but without this licence, or that preceding it, it is impossible to insert *prie-Dieu* in a line of verse. I have, I think, enumerated all the audacities of *Le Pélerin passionné,* and, taking them all in all, there is not one which would not have been called for and desired and blessed beforehand by Banville, our father, who has said: "The hiatus, the diphthong making a syllable in the line, and all the rest of those things which have been forbidden, and above all the optional employment of masculine and feminine rhymes, furnish the poet of genius with a thousand opportunities for delicate effects, continually varied, unexpected, inexhaustible." And has not Banville, loosing the reins of his Pegasus, further declared: "I could wish that the poet, liberated from all empirical conventions, had had no other master than his delicate ear, subtilized by the tenderest caresses of music. In a word, I wish knowledge, inspiration and life, continually renewed and varied, could have replaced a fixed and mechanical law."

The symbolists have sought to realize the most tuneful dreams and desires of our poets. They have done enough and more than enough to please him. It is said that the master is now alarmed and aston-

ished by innovations which he formerly invoked. This is very natural. He would not be an artist who did not love above all things and with a jealous love the forms in which he himself has inshrined the beautiful. The poet divines new forms; he urges their employment; but as soon as they appear they seem intrusive and he cries: "I have lived long enough!" Alas! the critic must not surrender to the charm of regret; he must follow out in all its evolutions, fearing to regard as incorrect and barbarous that which is a new discovery, a new refinement.

For my part, I find that M. Moréas' prosody somewhat disconcerts my taste without wounding it too severely. It satisfies my reason well enough:

Et mon cœur en secret me dit qu'il y consent.

As for his language: that, to tell the truth, one has to learn. It is unusual and at times impudent. It abounds in archaisms. But upon this point, which is the chief point, I do not wish to be unreasonably conservative and to quarrel with the future. Experience shows that the language changes just as prosody changes. It even wears out more quickly, since it is employed more abundantly. In times of intellectual activity it gains largely and loses largely from year to year, I might almost say from day to day.

I do not know whether we think correctly nowadays; I rather doubt it; but we certainly think a great deal, or rather, we think about a great many things, and we are making a horrible mess of the language. M. Moréas, who is a philologist and interested in linguistic problems, does not invent very many words, but he restores a great many, so that his verses, full of terms taken from old writers, are

like the Gallo-Roman villa at Garnier, in which we see the shafts of ancient columns and the remnants of architraves. The result is an amusing and fantastic combination. Paul Verlaine called Moréas:

> Routier de l'époque insigne,
> Violant des vilanelles.*

It is true that he belongs to the good old times, and that he always seems to be wearing a black velvet doublet. And I have a bone to pick with him. He is obscure. And we feel certain that he is not naturally obscure. On the contrary, he will suddenly put his hand on the exact word, the definite image, the precise form. And yet he is obscure. He is so because he wishes to be so; and if he wishes to be so it is because his æsthetic demands it. For that matter, all things are relative: for a symbolist he is limpidity itself.

But make no mistake: with all the faults and all the oddities of his school, he is an artist and a poet; he has a manner, a style, a savour of his own, an individual way of seeing and feeling things. Now and again he is exquisite, as in the little poem quoted here, which is a very good example of his work. You need only remember that *coulomb* was, in old French, the word for pigeon, and that it has remained so in the vulgar tongue, although it is but rarely used. Here it is:

> Que faudra-t-il à ce cœur qui s'obstine;
> Cœur sans souci, ah, qui le ferait battre?
> Il lui faudrait la reine Cléopâtre,
> Il lui faudrait Hélène et Mélusine,
> Et celle-là nommée Mab, et celle
> Que le soudan emporte en sa nacelle.

* "Old stager of the good old times, playing country airs upon the viol."

Puisque Suzon s'en vient, allons
Sous la feuillée où s'aiment les coulombs.

Que faudra-t-il à ce cœur qui se joue;
Ce belliqueux, ah, qui ferait qu'il plie?

Il lui faudrait la princesse Aurélie,
Il lui faudrait Ismène dont la joue
Passe la neige et la couleur rosine
Que le matin laisse sur la colline.

Puisqu'Alison s'en vient, allons
Sous la feuillée où s'aiment les coulombs.*

A little air for the viol; but admit that it is, as Verlaine has said, prettily played. For the rest, I commend you to *Le Pélerin passionné*.

There you will find poems more original as to their manner and their imagery; poems of which I could not, to tell you the truth, quote many lines without notes, commentary and vocabulary.

For, after all, M. Jean Moréas is rather a difficult writer. At all events he is not commonplace, this delicate Athenian, in love with archaisms and innovations, who strangely combines in his poetry the graceful scholarship of the Renaissance and the

* What does this obstinate heart (of mine) need;—This heart without a care, ah, what would make it throb?—It would need Queen Cleopatra.—It would need Helen and Melusina—And she whom they call Mab, and she—Whom the Soldan carries off in his boat.

Since Susan is coming, let us go—Under the green bower where the pigeons are making love.

What does it need, this wanton heart (of mine);—This quarrelsome heart, ah, what would make it yield?

It would need the Princess Aurelia,—It would need Ismene, she whose cheek—Surpasses the snow and the rosy tint—That the dawn spreads upon the hill.

Since Alison is coming, let us go—Under the green arbour where the pigeons are making love.

vague perturbation of decadent verse. It is said that he goes through the Latin quarter followed by fifty poets, his disciples. I should not be surprised if he did. He has, to attach them to his school, the erudition of an old-world humanist, a subtle mind, and a love of fair long arguments and encounters of the intellect.

AN APOLOGY FOR PLAGIARISM

I

"LE FOU" AND "L'OBSTACLE"

E Fou and *L'Obstacle:* "The Madman" and "The Obstacle." You would think it was the title of a fable. But the matter under consideration is an accusation of plagiarism. Our contemporaries are very touchy in this respect, and it is a matter of sheer good luck if, in our days, a well-known writer is not accused at least once a year of stealing ideas.

This misadventure, which neither M. Emile Zola nor M. Victorien Sardou escaped, has lately befallen M. Alphonse Daudet. A young poet, M. Maurice Montégut, has discovered that the main situation of *L'Obstacle* was drawn from a tragedy in verse from his own pen, *Le Fou,* which was printed in 1880; and he has written about it to the papers. It is true that there is in *Le Fou,* as in *L'Obstacle,* a mother who sacrifices her honour to the happiness of her child; who, the widow of a madman, confesses an imaginary fault in order to spare her son the menace of a morbid heredity, and to remove the obstacle which divides this son from the young girl whom he loves. There is no doubt upon this point. But if we look for plagiarism the search leads us farther afield than would have been thought possible, farther than could have been desired. For this situation, which M. Maurice Montégut believed, in

all good faith, to be his own property, has been discovered in a novel by M. Armand de Pontmartin, of whose title I am ignorant; in the *Héritage fatal,* by M. Jules Dornay; in *Le Dernier Duc d'Hallali,* by M. Xavier de Montépin, and in a novel by M. Georges Pradel. There is no cause for surprise here; on the contrary, it would be surprising if any situation at all had not occurred in the work of M. Pradel and M. de Montépin.

The truth is that situations are everybody's property. The pretensions of those who wish to reserve certain regions of sentiment for themselves reminds me of a story that was told to me recently: You are acquainted with a certain landscape-painter, who in his robust old age is like the oak-trees which he paints. His name is Harpignies, and he is the Michelangelo of the trees. One day he encountered, in one of the villages of Sologne, a young painter, an amateur, who addressed him in a tone that was at once timid and importunate:

"You know, Master, I have reserved this countryside for myself."

The worthy Harpignies made no reply, save that he smiled the smile of a Hercules.

M. Maurice Montégut cannot, it is true, be compared with this young painter. But he really ought to realize that a situation belongs not to him who was the first to discover it, but to him who has impressed it strongly upon the memory of mankind.

Our contemporary men of letters have got it into their heads that an idea may be a man's personal property. Of old no such idea was entertained, and plagiarism was not formerly what it is to-day. In the seventeenth century the subject was discussed by the professors of philosophy, dialectics and rhetoric.

Master Jacobus Thomasius, professor at the College of St. Nicolas of Liepzig, wrote about the year 1684 a treatise entitled *De plagio litterario,* "from which one perceives," says Furetière, "that one is free to appropriate the property of others in the case of works of the intellect." As a matter of fact, I have not read the treatise of Master Jacobus Thomasius; I have never in my life seen it, and I do not suppose I ever shall; if I mention it, it is sheer affectation on my part; I do so because it is cited in an old folio volume whose red-brown edges and dog's-eared leather binding inspire me with great respect. It lies open on my table, in the lamplight, and its aspect, which is that of a book on black magic, gives me a feeling, this quiet night, that I, sitting here in my arm-chair, beside a heap of my books and papers, am a sort of Dr. Faustus, and that if I were to turn over these yellow pages I should perhaps find the magic sign by means of which an alchemist could make the Helen of antiquity appear in his laboratory, like a ray of white light. A waking dream possesses me. Slowly I turn over the pages that have been turned before my day by hands now fallen into dust, and if I do not discover the mysterious pentacle I do at least come across a twig of dried rosemary, which was placed there by some long-dead lover. Carefully I unfold a thin strip of paper rolled around the stem, and I read these words, written in a faded ink: *J'aime bien Marie, le* 26^{me} *de juin de l'an* 1695. And this confirms my idea that there is an old stock of human emotions upon which the poets work their delicate, airy embroideries, and that one must not cry "Stop thief!" the moment one hears some one say: *J'aime bien Marie,* after having said it one's self. I have already said that of old,

plagiarism was not regarded quite as it is to-day. And I believe that old ideas, in this respect, are worth more than new, being more disinterested, nobler and more in conformity with the republic of letters.

In Roman law (I find this also in my old folio volume, which is bound in stipple calf, with edges of a soft, faded red which delight me), in Roman law, the plagiarist, in the proper sense of the word, was the furtive person who kidnapped other men's children or debauched and stole slaves. Figuratively he was a thief of ideas. Our fathers regarded plagiarism in this second sense as an abominable crime. Also they looked at the matter twice before imputing it to a man of any standing. Pierre Bayle, in his dictionary, gives a definition which is rather fantastic, but which helps us nevertheless to understand the term: "To plagiarize," he says, "is to carry off the furniture of a house, and the very sweepings; to steal grain, straw, chaff and dust all at once." You understand: for Pierre Bayle and the scholars of his day the plagiarist is the man who pillages the house of the imagination without taste or discernment. Such a rogue is unworthy to live and write. But the writer who takes from others only what is convenient and profitable to him, and who knows how to select, is an honest man.

We may add that it is also a question of degree. A witty writer, La Mothe Le Vayer, remarks about the same time: "One may rob as the bees rob without doing wrong to any; but the theft of the ant, that clears the whole granary, should never be imitated." La Mothe Le Vayer had an illustrious friend who thought as he did and imitated the bee. This was Molière. This great man took what he needed from everybody. From the moderns as from

the ancients; from the Latin authors, the Spaniards, the Italians and even the French. Quite at his ease, he went foraging in Cyrano, Bois-Robert, poor Scarron and Arlequin. He was never blamed for it; and rightly so. What if our fashionable authors do a little pillaging here and there? I hope they do. They will never amass as much plunder as La Fontaine and Molière. I very much doubt whether the severity of their accusers is founded upon an exact knowledge of the art of writing. Their severity is explained by reasons of another kind, the first of which is a financial one.

We must remember, in fact, that what in literature is called an idea has now a money value. It used not to be thus.

A writer has now an interest in the proprietorship of a dramatic situation, a romantic combination, which may yield a thousand pounds, or five thousand, or more, to the author who exploits it, even though he may be a mediocre writer.

Unhappily the number of these situations and combinations is more limited than people suppose. Coincidences are frequent and inevitable. Can it be otherwise when the human passions are in question? There are not so many of them. It is hunger and love that rule the world, and do what we will there are only two sexes. The greater the art, the more sincere, lofty and truthful, the simpler are the situations of which it will admit; considered in themselves, the more commonplace and indifferent. They have no value save that which genius gives them. To borrow a poet's subjects is only to take for one's self matter without value, common to all. I am equally persuaded of the sincerity of M. Montégut, who considers himself robbed, and the surprise

of M. Daudet, who does not understand what he is accused of. M. Montégut makes a complaint. The plaintiff should be heard. He will find judges. For my part, I must excuse myself, not having the documents before me. But if I had been he I should not have said a word. He accuses M. Daudet; M. de Pontmartin, I am told, if he were still alive, might accuse him in his turn, and it would be very extraordinary if we could not hunt up a few dozen obscure old writers to show that M. de Pontmartin himself was a plagiarist. Give me but forty-eight hours, and I will find the situation of the generous mother who falsely accuses herself in twenty writers, from the oldest Hindu story-tellers to Madame Cottin, who I am quite sure must employ it. In the meantime our brilliant contemporary, M. Aurélien Scholl, has just discovered it entire in *L'Héritage fatal,* a drama in three acts by MM. Boulé and Eugène Lillion, represented for the first time at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu on the 28th December, 1839.

A few years ago M. Jean Richepin was accused of stealing a ballad from the German poet Rückert. But M. Richepin proved without difficulty that he owed nothing to Rückert, that he had only borrowed from the same stock as the poet; that he had been foraging in an old collection of Oriental tales whose authors are as unknown as those of the Ass's Hide and Puss in Boots.

In this connection I will tell you the true story of what happened to M. Pierre Lebrun of the Académie française. M. Lebrun, when in his prime, about the year 1820, had derived from Schiller's *Marie Stuart* a correctly-written tragedy. M. Lebrun was a worthy Academician and a very good fellow. He was a lover of the arts. One night,

when he was in his eightieth year, he thought he would go to hear Madame Ristori, who during a brief sojourn in Paris was acting at the Salle Ventadour. On this particular evening the great actress was playing the part of Marie Stuart in an Italian translation of the German tragedy. While listening to the lines M. Lebrun, at the back of his box, kept passing his hand across his forehead, and after each scene he murmured, between his remaining teeth:

"I know that! I know that!"

It was sixty years since he had written his tragedy and he scarcely remembered it now; but he remembered even less of Schiller's play. And in the interval between the acts he kept on saying to himself:

"That's good: but where have I seen it?" Finally, at the sight of Marie Stuart bidding farewell to her women, his memory returned, and he whispered to his neighbour:

"Gad, these people have stolen my play!"

Then he added that it was a trifle, and that there was no need to speak of it; for he was a man of the world and feared nothing so much as making a scene.

Let us profit by the example of M. Pierre Lebrun, we who have had the misfortune to scribble on paper the likeness of our dreams! When we see that ideas have been stolen from us let us consider, before we cry out, whether they were really ours. I do not say this with any particular person in mind; it is simply that I dislike needless unpleasantness.

A man who cares only for letters is not interested in such disputes. He knows that no man can reasonably flatter himself that he has thoughts that no other man has thought before him. He knows that ideas belong to all; that one cannot say: "This is

mine," as the poor children, of whom Pascal speaks, used to say: "This dog is mine." He knows, in fact, that an idea is of value only because of its form, and that to give a new form to an old idea is the whole of art, and the only creation possible to humanity.

Contemporary literature is not without its wealth and its charm. But its natural splendour is impaired by two capital offences, avarice and pride. Let us confess it. We are dying of pride. We are intelligent, adroit, inquisitive, restless, audacious. We still know how to write, and if we do not reason so well as our predecessors, we perhaps feel more keenly. But pride is killing us. We want to astonish, and that is all we do want. Only one sort of praise touches us; that which declares our originality; as though originality were something desirable in itself and as though there were not sad as well as good kinds of originality. We crazily credit ourselves with virtues that the greatest genuises never possessed; for what they themselves have added to the common treasury, though it be infinitely precious, is little compared with what they have received from mankind. Individualism developed to the point which it has now attained is a dangerous malady. We reflect, despite ourselves, upon those days when art was not personal, when the anonymous artist was anxious only to do good work, when each worked upon the vast cathedral with no other desire than that of raising harmoniously toward the heavens the unanimous thought of the age.

In those days M. Montégut would not have complained to the confraternity of artists if M. Alphonse Daudet, his master and companion, had borrowed from him, in order to finish a stone figure, some fold

of drapery. But in those days how insipid were the songs, how trite the fables, and, with all its faults, how much more penetrating is our individual art, how much more subtle, various, ingenious and lovable! Our authors' little quarrels are irritating, but to an inquiring mind never was there a more interesting age than ours, if we perhaps except the age of Hadrian.

II

MOLIÉRE AND SCARRON

I REMARKED, with reference to *Le Fou* and *L'Obstacle,* that an inquiry into plagiarism always leads us further than we expected, and that more often than not we discover that the pretended victim is himself a thief. (I mean an innocent thief, and very often a thief unawares.) A scholar of Touraine, M. P. d'Anglosse, provides us with an excellent example in a review which I have just received. The writers in question are Molière and Scarron. And as I find, in this review, matter which completes and corrects what I was saying just now; as one of the works under consideration is that wonderful comedy of *Tartufe* which has been a subject of continuous and impassioned discussion for more than two centuries; and, lastly, as the smallest details relating to masterpieces are of interest, we will go back, following the indications with which we are provided, to the actual sources from which the great comedian derived the sixth scene of his third act; that powerful scene in which the impostor, in order to undo the effect of a just accusation, accuses himself

instead of defending himself, feigning to see in the revelation of his infamy only a trial which God has sent him, a trial whose salutary humiliation he blesses. The spectators of 1664 must have had some idea that they had already seen this somewhere, doubtless in something of Scarron's. In the year 1664 poor Scarron had already ceased to suffer and to deride himself. He who could not sleep while he lived had now been sleeping four years in a very tidy little chapel in the church of Saint-Gervais. His books, after his death, were the delight of lackeys, chamber-maids, and country gentlemen. They were greatly despised by respectable people, but there was in the city, and even at Court, a small number of connoisseurs who affirmed that they had read, in a certain collection of tragi-comic novels which the cripple had produced during his lifetime, a Spanish story, *Les Hypocrites,* in which one Montufar speaks and acts precisely as Tartufe, notably in what Scarron so truly calls "an act of counterfeit humility."

And there is nothing, even to the name, that does not bear a sort of resemblance; for Tartufe has a sound of Montufar. This Montufar is a dangerous rogue. Associated with a disreputable old woman, he assumes the mien of a devotee, and passing by the name of Friar Martin he makes a number of dupes in Seville. By chance a gentleman of Madrid, who knows him for what he is, meets him one day as he is leaving a church. Montufar and the old woman, who never leaves him, are surrounded by a crowd of people who kiss their garments, begging them not to forget them in their prayers. The gentleman, who cannot endure that these rascally creatures should abuse the credulity of a whole city,

makes his way through the crowd, and striking Montufar a blow with his fist:

"Wretched cheats!" he cries; "are you afraid neither of God nor of men?"

I will quote what follows word for word:

He would have said more, but his excellent intention of telling the truth, being a little too precipitate, did not meet with all the success that it deserved. All the people fell upon him, for they considered that he had committed sacrilege by thus insulting their saint. He was thrown to the ground and covered with blows, and he would have lost his life if Montufar, with admirable presence of mind, had not undertaken to protect him, covering him with his own body, preventing the more excited of the crowd from beating him and even exposing himself to their blows.

"My brothers," he cried at the top of his voice, "leave him in peace, for the love of God; calm yourselves, for the love of the holy Virgin."

These few words quieted this fierce tempest, and the people made room for Brother Martin, who drew near to the unfortunate gentleman, greatly pleased in his mind to see him thus maltreated, but making it appear from his expression that he was extremely annoyed; he raised him from the ground, where he had been thrown, embraced him and kissed him, covered as he was with blood and mud, and forcibly reprimanded the people.

"I am the offender," he said to those who would listen to him; "I am the sinner, I am he who has never done aught agreeable in the sight of God. Do you think," he continued, "because you see me clothed as a good man, that I have not been, all my life, a thief, the scandal of others and my own perdition? You are making a mistake, my brothers; make me the object of your insults and your stones, and draw your swords upon me."

Having spoken these words with hypocritical gentleness, he proceeded to throw himself with an even more hypocritical zeal at the feet of his enemy, and kissing them, not only did he beg for pardon, but he forthwith picked up his sword, his cloak and his hat, which had been lost in the confusion. He readjusted these upon him, and having led him by the hand to the end of the street he parted from him after giving him several embraces and as many blessings. The poor man was as though spell-bound both

by what he had seen and what had been done to him, and so full of confusion that no one saw him in the streets again as long as his business kept him in Seville. Montufar, however, had won all hearts by this act of counterfeit humility. The people gazed at him with wonder and the children used to shout after him: "The Saint! the Saint!" as they would have cried "The Fox!" after his enemy, if they had met him in the street.

Here, it would seem, is the original of Scene VI of the third act of *Tartufe:*

> Ah! laissez-le parler, vous l'accusez à tort,
> Et vous feriez bien mieux de croire son rapport.
> Pourquoi, sur un tel fait, m'être si favorable?
> Savez-vous, après tout, de quoi je suis capable?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Oui, mon cher fils, parlez, traitez-moi de perfide,
> D'infâme, de perdu, de voleur, d'homicide;
> Accablez-moi de noms encore plus détestés;
> Je n'y contredis point, je les ai mérités.
> Et j'en veux à genoux souffrir l'ignominie
> Comme une honte due aux crimes de ma vie.*

The resemblance, being manifest, was noted in the volume on *Molière* in the *Collection des grands écrivains,* which, begun by the lamented E. Despois,

> * Ah! let him speak, for you accuse him wrongly,
> You had far better credit his report.
> Why, in such case, be so favourable to me?
> For, after all, what do you know of me?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Ay, speak, dear son, and tell me I'm a traitor,
> A scoundrel, lost, a thief, a murderer;
> Heap on me names that are even more detested;
> See, I deny them not, I have deserved them;
> See, I will kneel, abased I will endure them
> As a disgrace my life of crime deserves.

was continued and completed by the most conscientious of editors, M. Paul Mesnard. This able writer, whom nothing escapes, could not neglect a comparison already made by various critics, and, if I mistake not, by M. Charles Louandre in his *Conteurs français.*

Still, one may ask oneself whether Paul Scarron was really the author of the novel *Les Hypocrites,* and whether he had not taken it from a writer beyond the mountains, as he did fairly often.

"Scarron," says the Abbé de Longuerue, "used to copy the Spanish authors a great deal, but they gained much by passing through his hands." Originally the volume containing *Les Hypocrites* had the title, or so I am assured, *Nouvelles tragi-comiques, tirées des plus fameux auteurs espagnols.* This reference was afterwards suppressed, and I have before me an edition of 1717, published by Michel David, in which nothing of the sort appears. But this is hardly of importance. If the note relating to the original publication is correct (which is very easily verified), Scarron himself acknowledged his habit of borrowing, in a vague fashion that would not content us to-day, but which was quite in order in an age when the author of a book inspired less curiosity than the book itself. He declared himself indebted for these novels to Spanish writers whom he did not name and whose names the reader was not in the least anxious to learn. It seems that no attention was paid to this admission, which none the less was worth remembering.

Les Hypocrites passed for an original work of Scarron's until the day when M. P. d'Anglosse, of

Blois, showed that the story was taken as a whole from a novel by Alonzo Geronimo de Salas Barbadillo, entitled *La Hija de Celestina* (Celestine's Daughter), which was first printed in Saragossa by the widow of Lucas Sauchez in 1612.

In this manner Molière took from Scarron what was not the latter's property. This is certain. But it remains to be ascertained whether the great comic writer went foraging in Scarron's works or those of Barbadillo himself. The French poets of the seventeenth century displayed a certain vanity in respect of the thefts which they committed in Spain, and there was doubtless more credit in levying a contribution upon Señor Barbadillo than upon that poor devil Scarron. Did not Corneille remark, with superb preciosity: "I considered that, notwithstanding the war between the two crowns, it was permissible for me to traffic with Spain. If this sort of commerce is a crime, then I have long been guilty of it. Those who will not pardon me this intercourse with our enemies will at least approve that I should pillage them."

Did Molière, in the case which we are considering, pillage Spain or did he plunder the cripple of the Rue des Deux-Portes? This is not at first sight very easy to determine. We may suppose that he read Spanish, as did most of the French authors of his time. One of his enemies said:

> . . . Sa muse en campagne
> Vole dans mille auteurs les sottises d'Espagne.*

Remark in passing that he is reproached, in these lines, not with stealing, but with stealing stupidities.

*. . . His muse, on the warpath,—Steals from a thousand authors the stupidities of Spain.

This is plagiarism as it was understood in the seventeenth century: taking the bad with the good, the chaff with the grain.

Whatever may be thought of this reproof, which is in any case impertinent, and which refers especially to the *Plaisirs de l'île enchantée,* imitated from a pastoral of Moreto's, we see that Molière passed, in his day, for an author well versed in Spanish literature. It is quite possible that he was acquainted with *La Hija de Celestina.*

And we are confirmed in this supposition after reading M. P. d'Anglosse's little work. There is, in Barbadillo's novel, a point which Scarron has rendered very inaccurately by this phrase: "He (Montufar) never quitted the prisons."

The original says: "He (Montufar) begged alms for the poor prisoners"; which corresponds exactly with these lines from *Tartufe:*

> Je vais aux prisonniers
> Des aumônes que j'ai partager les deniers.*

Another point has been noted in the Spanish text which is not in the French copy, and which Molière seems to have known of. Having described the episode of the gentleman of Madrid, who is nearly cut to pieces by the crowd for unmasking the traitor, Barbadillo adds:

"This gentleman remained confounded by this adventure and so full of vexation that, without completing the business which had brought him to Seville, he left for Madrid the same night, persuaded that only the devil could have played him this trick and repenting greatly that he had trusted to appear-

* "I am going to the prisoners—To distribute the money given me as alms."

ances. For, not being able to conceive that such sentiments of humility could be lodged in the soul of a Montufar, he remained convinced that he had been the dupe of his eyes, the sense of sight being, like the other senses, very subject to error."

There is in this a powerful irony which far surpasses the genius of poor Scarron. One is tempted to see in these last lines the original of the two lines spoken with such humorous seriousness by Madame Prunelle:

> Mon Dieu, le plus souvent l'apparence déçoit;
> Il ne faut pas toujours juger sur ce qu'on voit.*
> (Act V, sc. iii.)

On the other hand, Scarron, who translates very freely, has added to the character of the hypocrite one feature which is lacking in the original. He says that Montufar "lowered his eyes upon encountering women," and, strictly speaking, one might say that it is from the cripple that Molière has taken the handkerchief with which Tartufe wishes to cover Dorine's breast. But one cannot swear to this.

It is true that we find another novel of Scarron's stories among the sources of Molière's *L'Avare*. This is a picaresque tale, entitled *Le Châtiment de l'avarice*. I have no doubt that a scholar versed in Spanish literature, M. Morel-Fatio, for example, would know the original. M. Paul Mesnard, who has pointed out in his excellent edition, the debts which Molière owed to ancient and modern authors, does not even mention *Le Châtiment de l'avarice*. This is disdain and not ignorance, for the novel of which I am speaking is sufficiently well known. M.

* "My God, more often than not appearance is deceptive—One must not always judge by what one sees."

Charles Louandre has inserted it in his *Vieux Conteurs Français*. The text which I have before me is dated 1678, that is, the very year in which *L'Avare* appeared.

That Molière was acquainted with this tale or the original of which it is the translation is highly probable. In it we have the laughable love of a grey-bearded miser, which does not occur in Plautus, but which is the essential subject of Molière's play.

Scarron's miser is called Don Marcos and passes in Madrid for a gentleman. He was wont to say "a woman cannot be beautiful if she loves to receive, nor ugly if she loves to give."

Despite these maxims, he falls into the trap which some rascals set for him. One Gamara, "a broker of every sort of merchandise," comes to see him and boasts of the beauty, the wisdom and the extensive property of the lady Isidore, who in reality is only an old toothless courtesan, poorer than Job. The miser consents to see her, and becomes enamoured of her at a banquet which she gives him.

"At the end of the banquet Don Marcos confessed to Gamara, who accompanied him to his house, that the fair widow had made an impression upon him, and that he would willingly have given a finger from his hand to be already married to her, for he had never met a woman who was more what he wanted than she, although in truth he contended that after marriage she should not live in such ostentation and luxury.

"'She is living like a princess rather than like the wife of a private individual,' said the prudent Don Marcos to the dissembling Gamara, 'and she does not consider that the furniture which she possesses turned into money, and this money added to mine, is capable of bringing us in a good income, which we shall be able to place in reserve, and, through the industry which God has given me, we can make of it a considerable fund for the children whom God will give us.'

"Don Marcos was entertaining Gamara with these speeches or others like them when he found himself before his door. Gamara took leave of him after having given his word that on the following day he would conclude his marriage with Isidore, because, he said, matters of this nature were broken off as much by delay as by the death of one of the parties.

"Don Marcos embraced his beloved go-between, who went to tell Isidore of the state in which he had just left her lover. Meanwhile our amorous squire drew from his pocket a candle-end, stuck it upon the point of his sword, and, having lit it at a lamp which was burning before the public crucifix in a neighbouring square, not without offering up a sort of ejaculatory prayer for the success of his marriage, he opened with a master-key the door of the house where he lay and proceeded to get into his sorry bed, to dream of love rather than to sleep."

On the morrow he repairs to the house of his future wife and informs her how he intends to live:

"I like people to go to bed early in my house, and I like it to be safely locked up at night. Houses that contain anything cannot be too safe from thieves. For myself, I should never get over it were some idle thief, with no more trouble than that of taking what he finds, to deprive me in a moment of that which great labour has given me only after many years."

Scarron's miser is already Molière's wealthy, amorous miser. This rascal Gamara is precisely the puny Frosine. Don Marcos marries Isidore, who shortly afterwards flees with her accomplices, carrying off the poor man's money and portable property.

He, too, mourns his cash-box. But the rest has not the least resemblance to Molière's comedy. It is a series of burlesque or tragic adventures, which are lacking in charm as in probability.

These researches, which I have summarized to the best of my ability, tend to restore to the unfortunate Scarron what Molière took from him. But it ap-

pears that Scarron, when despoiled, laid hands on the property of others. It is extremely likely that *Le Châtiment de l'avarice* does not belong to him any more than *Les Hypocrites*. As for Molière, all that he takes belongs to him at once, because he sets his mark upon it.

JULES TELLIER*

(1863–1889)

"HE was a tall youth of twenty-two, thin and pale, with hollow eyes and a brown moustache. There was something haggard about his face, and something abandoned in his bearing."

So Jules Tellier described that Tristan Noël, a student of the Faculty of Rouen, † to whom he has lent his own doubts, his own melancholy. So he himself appeared to his friends. "A long face, gloomy, fervent eyes," says one; "an obstinate brow, the gaze direct and piercing, the smile rare," says another. So I saw him one morning; he had a melancholy expression, but he was full of ideas and very pleasant. He brought me his book on our living poets, a small, thin volume written with delicacy and penetration, perhaps too drily, and conceived without much critical effort. For the rest, he seemed to me little concerned about his book or himself. The neglected appearance of his clothing and his person, his stoop, his vague glance, and his speech, rumbling and as though he were speaking to himself—everything about him betrayed the dreamer, the man of meditation. It was poetry that brought him. I spoke to him at once of the poets; I named one and

* *Reliques de Jules Tellier,* 1 vol.

† As we know, there are no faculties at Rouen. Tellier places an imaginary student in an imaginary faculty.

another of those whose sure talent is known only to fastidious amateurs, and whose name serves as a passport to the initiated. He replied by reciting some of the lines of which his memory was full. He was an intimate and violent lover of poetry. I have known no one else, save Frédéric Plessis, who loved verse for its own sake to this extent—for its mysterious melody, its secret beauty. Tellier himself admitted, with a good grace, that he carried the cult of poets and poetry to extremes.

"I have been," he said, "the child who was Ovid, reading the poets of Rome and dreaming of them with veneration and imagining them like unto the gods:

*Quotque aderant vates, tot rebar esse deos.**

"And the man has not wholly rid himself of the illusions of the child. In truth, anyone who can manage to write ten good lines, even though apart from that, as often happens, he has neither good sense nor ideas nor wit, still appears to me at times as a privileged being, with his hair bound with a halo and his forehead marked with a sign."

This meeting was in the summer of 1888. Jules Tellier was then tutor to the children of the Comte de Martel-Janville, at Neuilly-sur-Seine. Born at Havre in 1863, he grew up in his native town. He had passed his licentiate and had taught rhetoric in the provinces. He was a contributor to the *Parti national*. Like so many others, he left the University for journalism and literature. He felt himself the

* Tellier had *quotquot erant vates*. I have restored Ovid's text, but the meaning is no longer quite the same. Ovid does not say that every poet seemed to him a god. He alludes to the confusion that came over him upon his first meeting with a poet.

master of his thoughts, and of his medium; he was surrounded by youthful and intimate admiration. He felt it a joy to contemplate his life and his path that lay open before him. He could permit himself, or so it was believed, far-reaching hopes and comprehensive ideas. Returning from a tour in Algeria, he was attacked by typhoid at Toulouse. He died there after twelve days' illness on the 29th of May, 1889, in his twenty-seventh year.

His friends have collected the prose and verse which he left behind in a little volume entitled *Reliques de Jules Tellier*. M. Paul Guigon has written for this volume a preface which testifies to an exquisite delicacy of heart and a very lofty feeling for all that concerned art. M. Raymond de la Tailhède has raised a poetic tomb above his friend, in the manner of the scholars of the Renaissance:

> Et voilà que tes yeux profonds se sont fermés!
> Mais ton âme, où vivaiént les sages d'Hellénie,
> Garde toujours, dans une éternelle harmonie,
> Les poètes pareils à des dieux bien-aimés.*

In the production of this posthumous collection MM. Le Goffic, De la Villehervé, Pouvillon, Paul Margueritte and Charles Maurras have also assisted. The last wrote on the morrow of Tellier's death: "One of the first and most refined writers of the day has been withdrawn from our midst." Jules Tellier's *Reliques* are of a nature to cause us poignant regrets.

This young man, who disappeared so soon, was assuredly a philosopher and a poet, and above all a

* And lo, those deep eyes of thine are closed!—But thy soul, in which dwelt the sages of Hellenism,—Still cherishes, in an eternal harmony—The poets, like beloved gods.

rare writer. By an extreme delicacy, with the modesty of a jealous affection that feared to surrender the relics of the departed to the indifferent and profane, MM. Paul Guigon and Raymond de la Tailhède have had Tellier's posthumous works printed for subscribers only, who were not very numerous, and they decided that the book should not be offered for sale. Consequently, after being printed, the book remains unpublished. I shall quote a few lines from it at once. But one should read them all, for the interest of this little book is that a soul is revealed in it. A soul at first restless and unhappy, but proud, which presently achieves calm and resignation. In many places, dating from his bad days, Tellier groans with unspeakable suffering. He is a prey to that black distress which is the price that has to be paid by exquisite souls. His trouble, one readily recognizes at once, is the malady of chimeras, the torment of young men who have read too many books and dreamed too many dreams.

It is dangerous, indeed, for young men of ardent imagination to sup too often with philosophers and courtesans of all times and countries, to live too many lives, to be by turn Nero and Seneca, to have possessed all the treasure of Crœsus, of the satraps, and of the Jew Issachar, when one is very poor; and bending over a deal table in a student's chamber, to prolong the frantic orgies of the decadence until the dawn. On emerging from these banquets of knowledge and beauty, when the imaginary crowns have fallen off, one sees that reality is narrow and dismal. One suffers more than is reasonable from the mediocrity of men and the monotony of things. One regards Nature with empty, gloomy eyes, as on the day after a fit of drunkenness. One no longer sees

the beauty of the world because one has drawn in dreams upon the treasury of illusions, which are our greatest wealth. And, like Tristan Noël, who is so like Jules Tellier himself, one longs to die.

But fortunately one does not always die, and the feeling passes. Life itself, in the long run, undertakes to cure you of the malady of illusions. And this malady would be more endurable, would be even grateful, or at least very dear, were it not usually mingled, in these imaginative youths, with troubles of the senses and pangs of the heart. Dreaming disposes them to a gentle tenderness and to pleasure, and it is truly a cruel experience, when one has gazed so closely upon the shade of Cleopatra or of Ninon, to be repulsed by a little dressmaker who knows nothing of literature.

Tellier tells us that such a misfortune befell the scholar Juan de Pontevedra, that Carmen did not love him and never would love him "because he was shy and awkward and knew nothing but his books." Juan should have consoled himself. He did not do so, because, having strolled beneath the myrtles of Virgil, a deathly languor overcame him. M. Nicole used to maintain that the poets are public poisoners, and he was right up to a certain point. But they only poison poets. They never poisoned M. Nicole.

Similarly, the poets and the philosophers had greatly perturbed Jules Tellier's youth. Having despaired of this world, he despaired of the other. He knew the illusion of paradise after he had known the illusion of landscapes (for he was a logician), and he was visited by the desire and the fear of death.

In the pages which he has left behind him we find traces of his lassitude and weariness, and we see that

more than once he found the savour of life more bitter than ashes. But we should form a very false idea of this young man if we regarded him as a despairing creature who only longed to die. We are better acquainted with the gilded ennui of the poets. The poets suffer from the malady of chimeras. All are affected, but they all recover. Tellier, like the rest, was recovering in the atmosphere of Paris, in the midst of his friends, in rapid and fruitful work.

It is true that he never became an hilarious person, a facetious "good fellow," a jovial companion. But he was a gallant man of letters, an elegant speaker, ready to savour the pleasures of the intellect and to mix gracefully with decent people. M. Maurice Barrès, to whom he was bound by close ties of friendship, represents him as polished in conversation, natural, amenable and discreet.

"He violently resented the insufficiencies of life, but he accepted them, and no one was ever less of a rebel. We both had a cult for Seneca, who was perhaps the most frequent theme of our conversation. The fastidious temper, restlessness and tolerance of this great and calumniated character enchanted us. Greatly superior to those Stoics with whom he liked to class himself, Seneca accepts the life of his age without sulking; it was simply that all his relations with men and things were governed by the intense conviction that we have to die and that we are living in the midst of things that must perish. Better than anyone Seneca teaches resignation. But in him it never assumes the attitude of weariness. His very real asceticism consists not in depriving himself, but in despising what he uses. He was Jules Tellier's master."

Here, then, we see Jules Tellier in private life as a gentle Stoic, able to pardon man and nature, which is the most necessary faculty, and showing to all a peaceful and benevolent exterior.

It was precisely this exterior which he allowed the public to see when he was working for the newspapers. Tellier bade fair to be an excellent critic. He was plentifully endowed with the spirit of refinement and a singularly delicate insight. M. Jules Lemaître, with whom he had made early acquaintance, had exerted over him the pleasant authority of a youthful mentor. And perhaps Tellier owed, to some extent, to the master, who was his comrade, that easy, flexible style which was his from the beginning, and which is not usual in youth. He tested his powers in a small, obscure review, *Les Chroniques,* which his two friends, Maurice Barrès and Charles le Goffic, founded more or less for his benefit. He contributed to it the *Notes de Tristan Noël* and *Les Deux paradis d'Abd-er Rhaman,* but it was in *Le Parti national,* for which he wrote from 1887 to 1889, that he expanded naturally into fanciful sketches, chronicles, literary miscellanies and travel notes. There are writers who believe that their superiority alone prevents them from writing for the newspapers. Perhaps they would discover a few other causes for this disability were they to look for them with diligence. It is necessary, if one is to address the public with the frequent intimacy of the newspaper, to take an alert and good-tempered interest in a great many subjects. One must take a broad and sweeping view of life and ideas. Lastly, one must possess the gift of sympathy, which is rare, but which Tellier possessed very fully.

In journalism he was very much at his ease and completely amiable, a little fantastic at times, and obstinate, but sincere and kindly; never commonplace or disdainful, and appositely correcting melancholy by irony.

It is impossible to measure the stature of his intellect by what he has left, but we may say that, when he died, a beautiful instrument of thought and imagination was broken.

He has left some verse, some of which will find a place in the anthologies, beside those of Frédéric Plessis, whom he admired. And Jules Tellier will be welcomed among the minor poets who have qualities which the great poets do not possess. If the *minores* of antiquity were lost, the crown of the Hellenic muse would be despoiled of its fairest flowers. The great poets are for all; the minor poets enjoy what is yet an enviable fate; they are destined to please the fastidious. It does not do to be too positive in matters of taste; but it seems to me that Jules Tellier's *Prière* * (Prayer to Death) is

* Here is the poem in full:

Fantôme qui nous dois dans la tombe enformer,
Mort dont le nom répugne et dont l'image effraie,
Mais qu'à force de crainte on finit par aimer,
Puisque la vie est vaine et que toi seule es vraie;

O Mort, qui fais qu'on vit sans but et qu'on est las,
Et qu'on rejette au loin la coupe non goûtée,
Mort qu'on maudit d'abord et dont on ne veut pas,
Mais qu'on appelle enfin quand on t'a méditée;

O la peur et l'espoir des âmes, bonne Mort,
Dont le souci nous trouble un temps, et puis nous aide,
Mystérieux écueil où se blottit un port,
Et poison merveilleux où se cache un remède;

a poem which our anthologists might adopt at once. They would be wise, too, in my opinion, not to forget this sonnet:

LE BANQUET

Au banquet de Platon, après que tour à tour,
Coupe en main, loin des jeux du vulgaire profane,
Diotime, Agathon, Socrate, Aristophane,
Ont disserté sur la nature de l'amour,

Apparaît entouré comme un roi de sa cour,
De joyeuses de flûtes en robe diaphane,
Ivre à demi, sous sa couronne qui se fane,
Alcibiade, jeune et beau comme le jour.

—Ma vie est un banquet fini, qui se prolonge,
Seul, parmi les causeurs assoupis, comme en songe,
J'ouvre et promène encor un regard étonné;

Les fronts sur les coussins ont fait de lourdes chutes:
Verrai-je survenir, de roses couronné,
Alcibiade avec ses joueuses de flûtes? †

O très bonne aux vaincus et très bonne aux vainqueurs
Qui sur leur fronts à tous baises leurs cicatrices,
O des douleurs des corps ou de celles des cœurs
La sûre guérisseuse et la consolatrice!

† At Plato's banquet, after Diotima, Agathon, Socrates, Aristophanes, cup in hand, far from the eyes of the profane vulgar, had by turns held forth upon the nature of Love,

There appeared, surrounded, as a king by his court, by flute-playing girls in diaphanous raiment, Alcibiades, young and beautiful as the day.

—My life is a banquet that is ended, but it lingers on; alone, amid the drowsy talkers, as in a dream, I open and cast around me an astonished gaze;

The heads have fallen heavily on the cushions: shall I see Alcibiades, crowned with roses, arriving with his flute-playing girls?

This is easy and gracious in its manner, with an air of smiling melancholy that pleases me greatly.

Puisque tant de ferveur pour toi s'élève en lui,
Qu'il veut te préférer à tout, même à l'Aimée,
Sois clémente à l'enfant qui t'invoque aujourd'hui,
Bien qu'il t'ait méconnue et qu'il t'ait blasphémée.

Ma haine s'est changée en un amour profond;
Voici croître en mon cœur guéri de ses chimères
L'ennui des voluptés dont on touche le fond
Et le morne dédain des choses éphémeres.

Vivre dans l'instant n'est que trembler et souffrir,
Songe à l'horrible attente et fais-moi moins tardive!
Il suffit que tu sois pour qu'on veuille mourir:
Le temps laissé par toi ne vaut pas qu'on le vive.

Donne-moi le Repos et l'Oubli, les seuls biens!
Endors-moi dans la paix de ta couche glacée!
Mais avant le moment où tu clôras les miens,
Ferme les yeux par qui mon âme fut blessée!

Périsse avant moi l'Etre éphémère et charmant,
Apparence flottant parmi les apparences,
Dont la grâce a troublé mon cœur profondément,
Et par qui j'ai connu de si dures souffrances!

Car, dût-elle aussitôt disparaître à son tour
De ce monde où tout n'est que mirage et que leurre,
Quand même pour la vie elle n'aurait qu'un jour,
Et quand pour le plaisir elle n'aurait qu'une heure,

Cette heure-là, rien que cette heure, en vérité,
Quand j'y songe un instant, m'est à ce point cruelle,
Que je n'en conçois plus même la vanité,
Et qu'à mon cœur jaloux elle semble éternelle.

Janvier, 1888.

(Phantom who must imprison us in the tomb,
Death, whose name repels and whose image terrifies,
But whom by force of fearing we end by loving,
Since life is vain and thou alone art real;

But, in agreement with M. Paul Guigon, I do not hesitate to set M. Tellier's prose far above his verse. In prose his phrasing is strong and supple. There is measure in it, and Tellier himself forgets himself so far as to say on one occasion that he wrote in a

---

O Death, because of whom we live without an aim, and are weary,
And fling away the untasted cup,
Death, whom at first we curse, whom we seek to avoid,
But to whom we call at last when we have considered thee;

O fear and hope of the soul, kindly Death,
Whose care perturbs us awhile, and then helps us,
Mysterious reef in which a haven is concealed,
Miraculous poison in which a remedy is hidden;

Most kind to the vanquished, and to the conquerors,
Who kissest the scars upon the brows of all,
O sure physician of the pains of the body and the heart,
And consoler!

Since such eagerness for thee rises within him
That he would put thee before all, even before the Belovéd,
Be merciful to the child who invokes thee to-day,
Even though he has mistaken thee and blasphemed against thee.

My hatred is changed into a profound love:
Lo, in my heart, cured of its delusions,
Grows a weariness of the pleasures whose depths are to be reached,
And a dull disdain for ephemeral things.

To live in the moment is only to tremble and to suffer.
Think of the horrible waiting and be less tardy!
It is enough that thou art—one must wish to die:
The time left us by thee is not worth living.

Give me Rest and Oblivion, the sole good things!
Lull me to sleep in the peace of thine icy bed!
But before the moment when thou closest mine eyes
Close the eyes by which my soul was wounded!

cadence "following a rhythm more subtle than that of verse." We may judge it by the following fragment, entitled *Nocturne:*

Nous quittâmes la Gaule sur un vaisseau qui partait de Massalia un soir d'automne, à la tombée de la nuit.

Et cette nuit-là et la suivante, je restai seul éveillé sur le pont, tantôt écoutant gémir le vent sur la mer et songeant à des regrets, et tantôt aussi contemplant les flots nocturnes et me perdant en d'autres rêves.

Car c'est la mer sacrée, la mer mystérieuse où il y a trente siècles le subtil et malheureux Ulysse agita ses longues erreurs; le subtil Ulysse qui, délivré des périls marins, devait encore, d'après Tirésias, parcourir des terres nombreuses, portant une rame sur l'épaule, jusqu'à ce qu'il recontrât des hommes si ignorants de la navigation qu'ils prissent ce fardeau pour une aile de moulin à vent.

C'est la mer que sillonaient jadis sur les galères et les trirèmes les vieux poètes et les vieux sages; et comme ils se tenaient debout à la poupe, au milieu des matelots attentifs, attentive elle-même, elle a écouté, en des nuits pareilles, les chansons d'Homère et les paroles de Solon.

Et c'est aussi la mer où, dans les premiers siècles de l'erreur chrétienne, alors que le règne de la sainte nature finissait et que commençait celui de l'ascéticisme cruel, le patron d'une barque africaine entendit des voix dans l'ombre et l'une d'entre elles l'appeler par son nom et lui dire: "Le grand Pan est mort!

May she perish before me, the ephemeral, charming Being,
The appearance floating amid appearances,
Whose grace has profoundly troubled my heart,
And because of whom I have known such heavy suffering!

For were she at once to disappear in her turn
From this world where all things are but a mirage and a snare,
Even though she had but a day for living,
Even though she had but an hour for pleasure,

That hour, merely that hour, in truth,
When I think of it for a moment, is to me so cruel
That I can no longer conceive even its vanity,
And to my jealous heart it seems eternal.)

Va-t'en parmi les hommes et annonce-leur que le grand Pan est mort!"

Et par la mystérieuse nuit sans étoiles, sur le chaos noir de la mer et sous le noir chaos du ciel, il y avait quelque chose de triste et d'étrange à songer que peut-être l'endroit innommé, mouvant et obscur que traversait notre vaisseau avait vu passer tous ces fantômes et qu'il n'en avait rien gardé.

Et c'est parce que cette pensée me vint, et qu'elle me parut étrange et triste, et qu'elle troubla longtemps mon cœur de rhéteur ennuyé, qu'il m'est possible encore, entre tant d'heures oubliées, d'évoquer ces lointaines heures noires où je rêvais seul sur le pont du navire parti de Massalia, un soir d'automne, à la tombée de la nuit.

(We left Gaul aboard a vessel that sailed from Massalia one autumn evening, at the fall of night.

And that night and the following I remained alone awake upon the deck, now hearkening to the wind moaning over the sea and dreaming of things that I regretted, now contemplating the waves of the night and losing myself in other dreams.

For this is the sacred sea, the mysterious sea whereon three thousand years ago the subtle and unfortunate Ulysses was tossed his protracted wanderings; the subtle Ulysses who, delivered from the perils of the ocean, was yet, according to Tiresias, to traverse many lands, bearing an oar upon his shoulder, until he should meet with men so ignorant of seafaring that they would take this burden for the sail of a windmill.*

It is the sea that the poets and the sages of old ploughed upon their galleys and their triremes; and as they stood erect upon the poop in the midst of the attentive sailors, it has heard, itself attentive, on nights like this, the songs of Homer and the words of Solon.

And this again is the sea upon which, in the first centuries of the Christian error, when the reign of holy Nature was ending and that of cruel asceticism was beginning, the master of one barque heard voices in the darkness, and heard one of them call him by his name, saying: "Great Pan is dead! Go forth among men and tell them that great Pan is dead!"

And in the mysterious starless night, above the black chaos of the sea and beneath the black chaos of the sky, there was something strange and melancholy in thinking that perhaps the name-

* See the following article: "The Oar of Ulysses."

less, shifting and shadowy spot through which our vessel is passing saw all these wraiths go by and has retained no trace of them.

And it is because this thought occurred to me, and because it seemed to me strange and melancholy, and because for a long while it troubled my heart, the heart of a weary rhetorician, that it is still possible for me, amid so many forgotten hours, to evoke those dark, remote hours in which I used to dream alone upon the deck of the vessel that had sailed from Massalia one autumn evening at the fall of night.)

Since Tellier's *Reliques* are not to be obtained from the publisher we had perforce to include this page at the end of our essay, in testimony, as they say in learned volumes.

THE OAR OF ULYSSES

E quoted (at the end of the preceding essay) a page of beautiful prose in which the lamented Jules Tellier relates the waking dreams that once enfolded him on the deck of a vessel sailing from Marseilles, which made the open sea at the fall of night. While gliding in the darkness over this little sea that seemed so large to the ancients, the poet felt, in his humanistic imagination, the amazement of the young Hellenic soul before the sea "with its innumerable murmurs," and he fell to dreaming of Ulysses. To our minds, formed by study of the classics, the Mediterranean is the cup of Homer. We still hear the singing of the Sirens upon those treacherous blue waters. So Tellier invoked the figure of Ulysses, the mariner. He was too intelligent not to feel how strange, mysterious and tremendous a figure he is. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have not told us everything about this man. You may be sure that the fishermen of Dulichium, the pirates of Zacynthus and the worthy old women busily mending their nets on the beaches of Epirus knew much more about him than Homer. Long before his day all this little world of the islands and the coast was familiar with the adventures of the king of Ithaca, when the rhapsodists made epic songs of them. The Ulysses of legend, the primitive Ulysses, was pleasurable and terrible as the sea over which he wandered for so long. His adventures, related in tales, in songs, in riddles, were

innumerable and miraculous. They formed an enormous cycle of which the epic has retained but little. Seen dimly in the shadow of the pre-Homeric traditions, this traveller, protected from the wind, the rain, the sun and the spray by a conical bonnet, appears to be of amazing stature. We can divine him as they dreamed of him, these seafaring men and fishermen accustomed to hear the Old Man of the seas mourning in the darkness; we can fancy him ingenious, impious, contending against the gods with cunning and audacity, sharing, in the islands, the bed of strange women, having seen that which one should not see, horrible, pursued by an inexorable fatality, condemned to endless wandering over the sea whose mysterious divinity he has violated, destined to experience unutterable pleasures and encounters that make the hair of the head stand erect; the man, in short, most worthy of envy and of pity, the old king of pirates, the father of navigators. Such, it seems, is this primitive Ulysses, formed by the popular imagination.

The divine anger weighs upon this contemner of the gods, whom men love for his audacity and his marvellous cunning. Like the Isaac Laquedene of the Christians, he is reprobate, he is accurst. I do not think I am wrong in saying that in the day-dream of which I was speaking but now, Jules Tellier had a vision of the King of Ithaca very closely akin to that I am trying to depict. Moreover, the adventure which he is careful to recall preferably to any of the others is one that bears the marks of a child-like and profound antiquity. For the sake of greater clearness, let me set the passage in question once more before the reader:

We left Gaul aboard a vessel that sailed from Massalia one autumn evening, at the fall of night.

And that night and the following I remained alone awake upon the deck, now hearkening to the wind moaning over the sea and dreaming of things that I regretted, now contemplating the waves of the night and losing myself in other dreams.

For this is the sacred sea, the mysterious sea whereon three thousand years ago the subtle and unfortunate Ulysses achieved his protracted wanderings, the subtle Ulysses who, delivered from the perils of the ocean, was yet, according to Tiresias, to traverse many lands, bearing an oar upon his shoulder, until he should meet with men so ignorant of seafaring that they would take this burden for the sail of a windmill.

I shall not be telling the reader anything new if I remark that Jules Tellier is here referring to the prediction which the seer Tiresias made to Ulysses in the land of the Cimmerians, always wrapped in mist and cloud. We shall find it in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey,* and this fragment, to judge by the poverty of its moral significance and the child-like awkwardness of the narrative, seems to be one of the most ancient and therefore one of the most venerable of that wonderful collection of popular tales which has come down to us under the name of the river of the poets.

This eleventh book, which in ancient times was known as the Nekuia, that is the sacrifice to the dead, enables us to witness a scene of barbarous magic borrowed, no doubt, from the traditions of a wholly primitive humanity. Ulysses, having escaped from the charms of Circe and reached the shores of the ocean, on a beach covered with eternal darkness evokes the shades of the dead with rites of barbaric simplicity. He digs, with his sword, a hole in the earth, into which he pours libations of milk, wine and water. He throws into it a handful of white

flour. Then on the brink of the pit that he has digged he cuts the throats of a ram and a black ewe. Thus evoked, the souls of the dead emerge in a crowd from the earth and fall greedily upon the blood that drips from the slaughtered victims. All seek to drink this blood, for it is only when they have moistened their lips with it that they have strength to speak and reply to the questions of the evocator. The King of Ithaca's mother, the venerable Anticlæa, rises up amid this cloud of shades. Ulysses recognizes her and weeps. But he turns her aside with his sword, in order to prevent her from drinking; for before all other souls he wishes to hear that of Tiresias, who is to reveal the future and instruct him in matters that are profitable to know. This brutality contributes not a little to the sense of uncouthness with which the whole of this necromantic scene is imbued. But in fair criticism we must not regard this uncouthness as a significant characteristic of Ulysses' character. We are confronted here by a popular tale which has found its way into the epic probably without much retouching. All the heroes of these old tales exhibit a similar brutality in analogous circumstances. They are all extremely positive and as far removed as possible from all that we call the natural feelings, which are really, on the contrary, cultivated feelings. Moreover, the narrative is quite incoherent. And it seems, from what follows, that Anticlæa remained silent and that Ulysses did not know how to make this venerable shade speak.

Very soon Tiresias appears, a golden sceptre in his hand. He drinks of the black blood, which revives him and loosens his tongue. He foretells that Ulysses will presently reach the island of Trinacria,

where the oxen of the Sun are pastured; he foretells the return to Ithaca and the slaying of the suitors. Then, unveiling a remoter future, he announces strange adventures of which the *Odyssey* does not speak, which are related to traditions for ever lost. It is this part of the prophecy that Jules Tellier recalls in the passage already quoted. Tiresias expresses himself much as follows:

> When thou hast slain the suitors in thy house thou must depart anew, bearing an oar upon thy shoulder, until thou meetest with men who know nothing of the sea, who do not eat of salted flesh and have never seen ships with their red prows nor oars that are the wings of ships. And I shall give thee a manifest sign, which thou wilt not forget. When thou shalt see coming towards thee another traveller who will believe that thou bearest a flail (ἀθηρηλοιγός) upon thy shoulder, then plant thine oar in the earth, and offer to Poseidon a ram, a bull and a boar. And it shall be given unto thee to return to thy house.

Tiresias ends by revealing the fact that Ulysses will live to a great age and that "gentle Death will come to him from the sea." Ambiguous words, by which the seer announces that the son whom Ulysses had by the terrible Circe will come from the sea and will kill his father without knowing him. This means perhaps that the future is made by the past, that we weave our destiny day by day as a net that will encompass us, that the consequences of our actions are ineluctable and that the kisses of enchantresses reappear as phantoms beside the deathbed of ancient kings with snow-white beards.

Dante, whose gloomy genius has yet further darkened the Ulysses of antiquity, knew nothing of the witch's son. He follows a barbaric tradition according to which the son of Laertes, extremely old, was sailing the ocean beneath the stars of the

Southern sky, when all of a sudden the sea opened and engulfed the intrepid sailor's vessel. The soul of Ulysses was plunged into Hell, where it suffers the torments reserved for false knights and impious men. But I am wandering far from my subject, which is simply to consider the strange encounter with the traveller who has never beheld the sea and does not know what a ship is. This landsman, miraculously destined to apprise the adventurous traveller of the end of his wanderings, his labours and his sufferings, ingenuously takes the oar which Ulysses bears upon his shoulder for an implement for thrashing corn. At the mere sight of this man the terrible cormorant of the rocks of Ithaca, the old pirate, is purified, washed clean of his crimes, pardoned, saved. A meeting which in its naïve fantasy seems to teach men that in pastoral life they will find peace and innocence while scouring the seas is an offence to the gods. It is in this idyllic sense that Chateaubriand, who has packed away the whole of classic antiquity in his *Martyrs,* accepts this fable when he makes one of his characters say: "Arcadians, what has become of the time when the Atridæ were forced to lend you vessels to sail to Troy, and when you took Ulysses' oar for the winnowing-basket of the fair-haired Ceres?"

Thus the landsman thinks that he sees a winnowing-basket or a flail. We have used the word "flail" as a provisional translation of the term ἀθηρηλοιγός, which does indeed mean "winnowing-basket" or "flail" or something of the kind. It is a composite poetical term which properly speaking contains the idea of destroying the awns of the ear of corn.

If Jules Tellier has substituted the sail of a windmill for the ἀθηρηλοιγός, of which Tiresias speaks,

it is perhaps through inadvertence, and because he had not the text of the *Odyssey* before his eyes. It was also perhaps because he was trying to imagine something that resembled an oar. A flail consists of two staves of unequal length, connected, end to end, by straps. This has not much resemblance to an oar. If, like Chateaubriand, we replace the flail by a winnowing-basket, we are worse off than ever. A winnowing-basket is a basket of wicker. Who could take an oar for a basket?

Here is our difficulty. I confess that it is a small one, and that for my part I thought little of it, when I received a letter from M. Paul Arène in which this difficulty seems to be solved. It is a charming letter with a moral fragrance about it. I shall place it in my old folio Homer, facing the lines to which it refers with a graceful ingenuity and a feeling for nature such as we rarely meet with, and which, for that matter, we scarcely look for (as we must admit) in the professional grammarians.

Since this letter is delightful, and since it speaks of Homer and Mistral, I shall take the liberty of printing it, although it is private and familiar. Paul Arène, when he wrote it, had no suspicion of the use to which I should put it. I feel that I am indiscreet. Above all things, do not tell him that I have quoted it. Here it is, the whole of it, word for word:

PARIS, 11 *February*, 1891.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I counted on meeting you the other day to confer with you upon a matter of some importance.

What Tellier says doesn't matter, and Homer is not an idiot. Homer would never have imagined that anyone could have taken an oar for the sail of a windmill—and windmills did not exist in the days of Homer.

In Provence—and this proves that you ought to go there in

order to be wholly a Greek—in Provence, after the harvest, we throw the corn into the winnowing-basket with shovels which are, as a matter of fact, by no means unlike oars.

It is therefore natural that a mountain people, knowing nothing of the sea, or the things of the sea, should have taken the oar which Ulysses bore upon his shoulder for one of the shovels that we use in winnowing corn.

It is pleasant to shed a light upon Homer through the fogs of the ingenuous commentators.—However, it is to Mistral that the honour of this contribution is due. We made the discovery, laughing like a couple of peasants, one day when we were reciting the *Odyssey* beneath the black cypresses of Maillan.

The gods keep you merry!

Your,

PAUL ARÈNE.

This comment, you will agree, is at least fresh and graceful. I know of only one other that has this living rusticity. It is a landscape of George Sand's which the lamented M. E. Benoist has included in a note to his Virgil in order to explain a passage in the *Eclogues*.

I dedicate Paul Arène's letter to the commentators of Homer. My poet is right. What Tellier says doesn't matter, Homer is divine.

If, as I believe, the *Iliad*, and above all the *Odyssey*, are a collection of popular tales, of childish myths, and, to speak the language of the traditionists, of *Märchen*, of fairy-tales, and if the foundation of these two poems belongs to the region of folk-lore, they are none the less the most sacred monuments of the poetry of our races. In them the oral traditions of the people are treated with a gracious nobility and a sovereign wisdom, and in a majestic style which proceeds from a powerful instinct for the beautiful. These poems, in which the clumsy miracles of the primitive mythologies are humanized, harmonized and purified, bear witness, as Mr.

Andrew Lang has so truly said, to "the unconscious delicacy and the unfailing tact" of the Hellenic genius at its birth. There is nothing finer in the world.

You know something of this, my dear Arène, since you are a poet and a Provençal, and since Provence is still Greece. You have not given me time to tell you so. In your seemly joy at having re-discovered the ἀθηρηλοιγός of Homer at the foot of the Alpilles you remind me of Mistral, who once, when some one was extolling the Provençal *ayoli,* replied, simply:

"The Greeks made their soldiers eat it to give them courage."

I promise you, my dear friend, that I will one day go with you to visit your Elysian fields, your meadows of asphodel and your pine-woods, to seek Cythaeron amid the rocks of the Crau and to gaze upon

Arles, la belle Grecque aux yeux de arrasine.*

In the meantime I think, with you, that the Homeric age was not acquainted with windmills.

M. Encaussé, the head of the Charité clinic, who is known as Papus by the Magians, has written a book to prove that all our modern inventions, even the telegraph, the telephone and the phonograph, were known to the ancients. Still, I believe with you, my dear Arène, that Tellier was wrong to put the sails of windmills into the mind of a traveller liable to cross the path of Ulysses, wearing his sailor's bonnet and carrying an oar on his shoulder. What a meeting! Think of it! To find oneself face to face with the man who had seen the Cicones,

* "Arles, the fair Grecian maid with Saracen eyes."

the Lotophagi, the Cyclopes and the Lestrygons, whom enchantresses had taken to their couch and who had evoked the dead! You are right, my poet: never mind what Tellier says. It was the Arabs who invented the windmill. At least, so the dictionaries say. They also say that windmills were unknown in Europe until after the Crusades. I will even add, out of sheer pedantry, that one of your compatriots, M. Fraissinet, author of a little book entitled *Panorama,* published in 1825, asserts that the first windmill was built in France in the year 1251. It may be that this assertion is not so accurate as it is precise. But that does not in any way affect our chief argument. The important point is that the Homeric ἀθηρηλοιγός is now explained, supposing that some commentator has not already explained it, for I confess I have not looked to see. The thing that resembles an oar is not precisely a flail, or a winnowing-basket, but a winnowing-shovel. The harvesters of the fields of Greece and the Isles made use of it four thousand years ago, and here to-day we find it in the hands of the peasants of that French Greece which we call Provence. Frédéric Mistral and Paul Arène recognized it and recited passages from the *Odyssey* beneath the cypresses of Maillane. What a pleasing gloss to write on the margin of the eleventh book of the *Odyssey!*

Printed in *Le Temps,* this discussion of Ulysses' oar. which assuredly had no other merit than that of including M. Arène's delightful letter, has amused far more readers than I would have believed. There are still minds in France that love ancient literature. The ἀθηρηλοιγός has brought me some interesting letters. I think I should give them here:

SIR,

Permit one of your very assiduous readers, whose business it is to teach Greek, to make a protest, on behalf of his sometime teachers, in connection with the meaning to be attributed to the word ἀθηρηλοιγός in the eleventh book of the Odyssey, line 128. It can only be a bad French translation that has provided you and your friends with the meaning of *flail* or *winnowing-basket;* long ago, in the scholarly editions of the Homeric poems, it was decided that the true meaning of this term was that which M. Paul Arène suggests in the charming letter which he has written you. You will find it, for example, in Alexis Pierron's classic edition, published by Hachette (*Odyssée,* Vol. I, p. 467, note 128): "Ἀθηρηλοιγός, *a shovel for winnowing grain.* The traveller, who has never seen an oar, takes the oar which Ulysses bears upon his shoulder for a πτύον. The question is proof to Ulysses of a complete ignorance of nautical matters.—The word ἀθηρηλοιγός signifies destruction of the awns of the ear, not destruction of the straw. There is therefore no question of a *flail.* Homer was not acquainted with the flail. Moreover, a flail does not resemble an oar. The reference is therefore to the shovel with which the grain, thrashed but still mixed with the husks, is thrown into the air. . . ."

This edition of M. Pierron's dates from 1875. For the rest, Pierron himself cannot claim the credit of this explanation, for it dates from antiquity itself. In the Homeric scolia we find under the name of Herodian (see Pierron, same note): Ἀθηρηλοιγός ὀξυτόνως Δηλοῖ δὲ τὸ πτύον. Now open a Greek-French dictionary, such as that of Alexandre, which I have in my hands, and you will find: πτύον, *shovel for winnowing.* You will see that the gloss in the margin for which you ask already exists.

These remarks, however, by no means detract from the merit of your Provençal exegete. No one will be astonished that in default of book-knowledge a poet of the Midi should have had the intuition of what the ancient Ionian bard intended to say. But we must also leave something to the poor scholars who have so long grown pale and old bending over these eternally youthful pages.

Accept, I beg you, the assurance, etc.

E. POTTIER.

14 *February,* 1891.

POITIERS, 15 *February*, 1891.

SIR,

The interpretation of the word ἀθηρηλοιγός in the line

φήη ἀθηρηλοιγὸν ἔχειν ἀνὰ φαιδίμῳ ὤμω

(*Od.* XI, 128), proposed by M. Arène and adopted by you is ingenious and graceful, but very doubtful in my opinion. It is true that fifty or sixty years ago threshed corn was still winnowed with broad wooden shovels; I have seen this method employed in my young days, even in La Beauce; it is also true that in some provinces of France the inhabitants employ, in rowing on the rivers, long oars whose lower extremity, which dips into the water, is very broad and like a spade. An inhabitant of an inland district might thus confuse an oar of this shape with a winnowing-shovel. But it must be remarked that this form of oar is neither used nor capable of being used at sea, where the long oar is employed which is only gently and slightly flattened towards its extremity. Now Ulysses is a sailor who has scoured the whole of the Mediterranean, and the oars of his ships could never have had the shape of a spade, even to the eyes of the most ignorant of hinds. Further, to translate ἀθηρ(η)λοιγός by winnowing-shovel is to do undue violence to the natural meaning of the word. ἀθηρ means *ear of corn;* λοιγός, *destruction;* G. Curtius connects it with the R. Sanskrit Rug. Rug-à-mī, orange.—It is clearly an implement for destroying, breaking, crushing the *ear*, an instrument for threshing corn. The winnowing implement, whatever its form, serves only to hull the corn where it has been threshed, to rid the grain of the crushed straw of the ear and its broken hash; it is a flail. Now there used to be flails—I have seen them in Maine and Anjou; there are perhaps still such in small farmyards—which may assume the shape of the long-bladed oar. The striker is not round, but very flat, almost like an ordinary oar-blade, and when the threshers are going to the barn, with the striker attached to the handle and fallen back, the whole thing, at a distance, would appear to anyone extremely like an oar.

Forgive an old Hellenist—the species is becoming rare—for this possibly inopportune intervention, of which you may make what use you will, and with my thanks for the pleasure that your articles always afford me, even when I do not share your opinions, accept the assurance, etc.

A. ED. CUIGNET.
Honorary Rector of the Academie de Poitiers,
Correspondent of the Institute.

SIR,

. . . . . .

The proof that the windmill-sail or flail which Tiresias mentions to Ulysses in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey* is merely a winnowing-shovel is decisive. But when you were told that Homer had to wait for the commentaries of the scholiasts Mistral and Arène to become intelligible, did you not experience a certain doubt?

Never mind what Mistral and Paul Arène say. These gentlemen come too late.

It seemed to me very surprising that German and French (to say nothing of English) scholarship should have allowed themselves to be outstripped by the open-air school. I immediately discovered the proof of the contrary on opening a translation of the *Odyssey,* which is not, however, by a noted Hellenist, but merely a conscientious man.

You will find on page 201 of the translation of the *Odyssey* made by Eugène Bareste, illustrated by Theod. de Lemad and Titeux (Paris, Larigne, 1842, in 8vo) a note ending thus:

" . . . *The article in question is simply a wooden shovel* used to throw the corn on to the threshing-floor and detach it from the chaff. It will readily be understood that an oar might be mistaken for this implement by men who had no idea of navigation; for, said the ancients, *the threshing-shovel of the sea is the oar, and the oar of the land is the threshing-shovel.*"

You will see that with the best will in the world the commentary which has served you as the occasion and the pretext of developments . . . cannot be placed in the margin of the eleventh book of the *Odyssey,* at all events in Bareste's translation, except as a useless repetition of the note which I have copied for you.

Accept, Sir, the expression, etc. . . .

P. LALANNE.

ERCHEN (SOMME), 15 *February,* 1891.

DISON, 16 *February,* 1891.

I too, Sir, read Homer! I have been doing so for thirty years, but I am not yet satiated. What would you have?—we are tenacious of our crazes in the provinces!—You should understand from this confession the pleasure it gives me to see that masters like yourself and the lovable Arène still find time, in Paris, to amuse yourselves with the verses of the old singer.

Excuse me, then, if I join in the conversation, and allow me a little pedantry.

I was brought up in the country; so when I read for the first time the passage of the *Odyssey* when Tiresias foretells to Ulysses "that a traveller will ask him, pointing to his oar, why he carries a winnowing-basket on his shoulder" I was terribly shocked, and indignant with the translator, for as my god could not err, he must have been betrayed by his priest!—when, later, I was able to read the text, I returned to this prediction of Tiresias, and I was fortunate enough to elucidate the badly translated idea by myself.

I perceive, to begin with, that ἀθηρηλοιγός does not mean winnowing-basket; this is not its exact meaning; it is πτὺον which means winnowing-basket, the implement of wicker with two handles, shaken by a man, as Homer, for that matter, shows us in this passage of the thirteenth book of the *Iliad* (line 588, *et seq.*):

> Ὡδ' ὅτ ἀπὸ πλατέος πτὺοφιν μεγάλην κατ' ἀλωὴν
> θρώσκωσιν κύαμοι μελανόχροες, ἢ ἐρέβινθοι,
> πνοιῇ ὑπο λιγυρῇ καὶ λικμητῆρος ἐρωῆ.

(As on a wide threshing-floor the black beans or the peas leap from the broad winnowing-basket under the blusterous breeze and the effort of the winnower.)

There are no absolute synonyms, neither in Greek nor elsewhere. It is plain that the words ἀθηρηλοιγός and πτὺον denote different implements, both familiar to the poet, who knows what he is saying. The winnowing-basket is the first, πτὺον.—I soon discovered the second, ἀθηρηλοιγός: this is the granary shovel, the wooden spade, long and broad, sufficiently like an oar for a man knowing nothing of navigation to make a mistake; the shovel with which heaped-up corn is often shifted in order to aerate it so that it shall not become heated, and also to rid it of dust.

This is a winnowing, like the other kind; moreover, shortly after this first discovery I had the pleasure of verifying its accuracy by making a second one, which consisted of ascertaining that our Burgundian peasants very properly called this granary shovel a *van*, just as they called the true wicker winnowing-basket a *van*, because they had not two words, as Homer had, one for each implement.

Except for a few lines evidently translated by ignorant copyists, there are never any obscurities in the pure Homeric text. It is true that in order to understand it properly one must have a

thorough knowledge of agricultural life and the life of the peasant, which did not change from the time of the *Odyssey* to the middle of our century, and which has always been the same in all countries.

I beg you to forgive me for this lengthy indiscretion; and pray believe me, etc.

CUNISSET-CARNOT.

SIR,

Permit a professional grammarian to make an observation relating to the word ἀθηρηλοιγός. The word by itself is very vague (*that which makes the awns of grain disappear*), and does not indicate the form of the implement. Moreover, it will be found translated by *van* (winnowing-basket) in Alexandré's Dictionary and by *fleau* (flail) in Leconte de Lisle's translation of the *Odyssey*, a meaning which is not satisfactory. I believe the translation of MM. Mistral and Arène is the right one. Only, it is not new. Pape's Greek-German dictionary, widely known even in France, very properly translates ἀθηρηλοιγός by winnowing-shovel (*worss-chaufel*).

As for the custom of winnowing grain entirely with the shovel, and not merely using the shovel to throw the corn into the winnowing-basket, you will find it described and illustrated in a classic volume, long ago translated into French: this is Anthony Rich's dictionary of Greek and Roman antiquities, in the article on *pala*, No. 2. By a curious chance, on the same page (*pala*, No. 1), you may see pictured a labourer walking along with his shovel over his shoulder. It does not require a great effort of the imagination to see in this shovel an oar, and this figure might almost represent Ulysses with his oar upon his shoulder.

Where M. Paul Arène is again quite right is when he advises us to travel in Provence in order to understand the ancient writers. For my part, I assure you that all the nautical and marine epithets in Homer, which had seemed vague and sometimes strange when I construed Homer as a schoolboy, struck me as being highly intelligible and extremely truthful when I had lived on the coast of Provence. A certain isolated rock near the Giens peninsula enabled me to understand Sophocles' *Philoctetes* better than the commentaries of the most scholarly editions.

Be so good, Sir, as to accept the assurance, etc.

P. CLAIRIN.
Professor at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand.

PARIS, 17 *February*, 1891.

PARIS, 21 *February*, 1891.

SIR,

Having read with very keen interest your latest article in *La Vie Literaire* (*Le Temps*, 15 February, 1891), I am taking the liberty of writing to you on the subject of the phrase which you have cited from *Les Martyrs*.

At Pleudihen and Minihic-sur-Rance the peasants make use of shovels "which are not unlike oars," as winnowing implements. I should say they winnow, they cleanse their corn by means of shovels. The peasants, provided with shovels, stand facing the wind and throw the grain before them in a semicircle. It was this, no doubt, that enabled Chateaubriand to write the phrase in question, in which the word *van* is the literal translation of ἀθηρηλοιγός.

Yours most assiduously,
GUSTAVE FRITEAU.

BLAISE PASCAL AND M. JOSEPH BERTRAND *

STUDY of Blaise Pascal by M. Joseph Bertrand could not fail to interest us. One was curious to know what the scientist to whom mathematics owes its latest conquests thought of the genius who helped to create the calculus of probabilities and solved difficult problems relating to the cycloid.

Those who are fortunate enough to be able to judge the value of M. Bertrand's labours in mathematical physics and this same calculus of probabilities of which Huyghens and Pascal indicated the beginnings, are agreed in extolling the brilliant futility of the permanent secretary of our Academy of Sciences. This is not permitted to me; I must perforce halt, full of regret, on the threshold of the sanctuary in which the initiated investigate the only truths which it is given to man to attain completely; and I can but lament my exclusion from the temples of certitude. But a general survey of the history of mathematics is enough to enable one to recognize the important place which is occupied by M. Bertrand's work and to realize that this master has brought to analysis that swift lucidity, that elegant conciseness which give grace to proof and reveal truth with all the radiance of her diadem.

* *Blaise Pascal,* par Joseph Bertrand, de l'Académie française, secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie des sciences, 1 vol. in.-8vo. *Le dogmatisme et la foi dans Pascal,* par Sully-Prudhomme (in the *Revue des Deux Monds* of the 15th October, 1891).

Algebra and geometry have their style, like music and poetry, and it is by the grand style that we recognize genius, in the sciences as in the arts.

The sure superiority of M. Bertrand in the science of numbers and diagrams gives infinite value to all that he tells us of the discoveries and experiments which Pascal has bequeathed to us. Whether he is defining Pascal's share in the establishment of the calculus of probabilities or showing us through what uncertainties this genius passed before he could build up the theory of the weight of the atmosphere, whether he is telling us the story of the cycloid, in which the enemy of the Jesuits displayed more zeal for truth than indulgence for those who were seeking it with him, or whether he advances as an incomparable masterpiece the theory of the hydraulic press, I marvel and absorb information with perfect confidence; but there is one point which will interest every one. It is this simple statement: "Pascal made his first discovery in the matter of conic sections at the age of sixteen." For we do not forget that he who records this example of wonderful precocity was himself, almost sixty years ago, a child prodigy. Joseph Bertrand competed, at the age of eleven, with the young men who were presenting themselves at the École Polytechnique, and satisfied all the tests. This reminiscence will suffice, I think, to give a certain interest to the page which begins with these words: "The curves studied by Pascal were the sections of a cone with a circular base, that is, the perspective of a circle."

To sum up, and to linger no longer over a subject into which I cannot enter, this is how M. Joseph Bertrand judges Pascal as geometrician and physi-

cist, comparing him with the broadest and most comprehensive mind of modern times:

> For Pascal, as for Leibnitz, in the history of the sciences, fame is greater than achievement, and this is only justice; for genius is superior to fame; in them abundance does not amount to wealth. Mathematics was for them an amusement and an exercise, never their principal preoccupation, and still less their aim in life.
>
> With the same profundity and equal aptitude, their minds were dissimilar. Leibnitz, interested in everything, excepting details, proposed new methods, leaving to others the trouble and the honour of applying them. Pascal, on the other hand, wishes to define everything exactly; the results alone interest him. Leibnitz discovers the tree, describes it and departs. Pascal exhibits the fruits without mentioning their origin. If the difficult problems solved by Pascal had occurred to Leibnitz, after solving a few of them, doubtless the simplest, he would not have failed to describe them as a great step forward in the integral calculus. Pascal promises solutions, gives them, concealing nothing, but without laying stress upon his method, often without allowing it to appear.
>
> If Pascal, whose genius has had no superior, had, like Leibnitz, hit upon the principle of the differentials, without speaking of a revolution in science, he would have selected, in order to demonstrate them, precisely those results which were least closely related to the proof, if he had not preferred, as he often did, to allow all trace of his meditations to disappear with him. One might compare Leibnitz to a mountain that throws off the rains; Pascal to a valley which collects their waters; adding, perhaps, that the mountain is enormous and the valley deep and hidden.

In this essay M. Bertrand is far from considering Pascal principally as a geometrician and a physicist. These considerations fill only a few pages; on the other hand, long chapters are devoted to the man, the polemist, the thinker, the writer, and no one will be surprised that the author of the admirable biographies of Poinsot, Gariel, Michel Charles, Elie de Beaumont and Foucault, to mention only these, should have wished to exhaust the whole of his

subject, even though the subject were Pascal. M. Bertrand has a mind open to all things, and his curiosity extends to the secrets of nature. He is very careful to tell us that geometry excludes nothing. And this we shall readily grant him. Geometry is at the basis of everything, or rather it is in everything as the skeleton in the animal. It is abstraction and it is reality. The visible world conceals it. But in the infinitely varied play of the forms under which the universe appears to our astonished mind, its laws, always certain, govern the matter that sleeps and the matter that is animated, the crystal and the man, the earth and the planets. It rules in the beauty of women, in the harmonies of music, in the rhythm of poetry and the order of our thoughts. It is the measure of all things. In it is movement; in it is stability. Happy is he who follows at length the noble order of its symbols, who discovers its immutable properties, and who has the art

De poursuivre une sphère en ses cercles nombreux!*

But what am I saying? Are we not all in some sort geometricians? Without geometry could the child walk or the bee make honey?

No, truly geometry excludes nothing; not even the poets whom M. Bertrand readily quotes. He has ideas about everything. It is believed, on what grounds I know not, that he is by no means opposed, all scientist though he is, to any of the revealed religions which to-day share between them the faith of humanity. I hasten to say that in order to surprise this state of mind in his book on Pascal one requires a mental subtlety which I do not possess. Whether he is free-thinker or Catholic, he promises,

* "Of pursuing a sphere in its numerous circles."

at the outset, that we shall know nothing about it; he is as discreet as Fortunio. I confess that after reading him I know no more than he intended me to know, and I have not divined the thoughts at the back of his mind. Yet he had excellent opportunities for betraying himself while treating of the life, ideas and work of Pascal.

His life, his work, his ideas: such, in fact, is the subject which he has proposed to himself. And he has, it is true, dealt with it; but in his own fashion, without troubling about proportion, without seeking to form a whole. The negligence is intentional, and it is not a weakness. He does not finish the biography which he commenced; he runs and leaps whenever it enters his head to do so; he stops when it pleases him to do so. He is astonishingly agile and capricious. His mind, accustomed to transcendental methods, laughs at our too simple methods of explanation and criticism. On occasion he is an admirable casuist; he takes a liking to casuistry and lingers over it for his own pleasure and ours. He does not emerge from it; he is like a hare in a bed of thyme. But with two leaps he covers the rest of his course and reaches the goal. For La Fontaine is wrong: the hare always arrives before the tortoise, just as genius always gets the better of goodwill.

What it is to have calculated the number of the values which a function acquires when one changes the letters! After this, if one takes the trouble, one stands revealed as a greater casuist than Escobar or Sanchez. I assure you that M. Bertrand is incomparable in the matter of deciding difficult problems. He has, as his colleagues in the Academy, two great directors of the conscience: M. Alexandre Dumas,

who is severe, and M. Ernest Renan, who is indulgent. If M. Bertrand undertakes, like them, the office of a spiritual guide, I prophesy that he will succeed to perfection; above all since sinners are suffering to-day from extreme uneasiness and all sorts of scruples. He is subtle. That is what people want.

I can say now without a smile that he displays, in his examination of *Les Provinciales*, the rarest faculties of analysis. And it is evident after this that the *Petites lettres* are merely a partisan effort. Not that Pascal altered the texts, of which, for that matter, he knew only the extracts which these gentlemen gave him; he had read nothing. His quotations, on the other hand, have been found on the whole to be correct. But M. Bertrand shows us that he found in St. Thomas a great many decisions with which he reproaches the Jesuits. As a rule, he blames the whole company for what referred to a single member and has in some cases been contested by another. In short, he is a party man.

To tell the truth, we scarcely doubted it. And it would not do to say that M. Bertrand has revealed the partiality of Louis de Montalte in order to give pleasure to the Jesuits; we should be in danger of saying a very foolish thing.

These quarrels concerning grace are as dead as those of the realists and the nominalists. The old distinctions of spirit and doctrine no longer survive among the clergy, who have, as a whole, become Roman. The Jesuits of to-day are not like the Jesuits of old. They have perhaps a stricter morality; I know they are less polite. I doubt whether they trouble themselves much as to what Pascal said of their forgotten predecessors.

However, M. Bertrand is not the first to demonstrate Pascal's partiality. In a famous volume dating from 1768 you will find the following verdict on *Les Provinciales*:

"It is true that the whole book rests on a false foundation. The extravagant opinions of several Spanish and Flemish Jesuits are adroitly attributed to the whole Society. They might equally well have been unearthed from among the Dominican and Franciscan casuists; but it is the Jesuits alone that are complained of. An attempt is made in these letters to prove that they had formed the intention of corrupting men's morals, an intention that no sect, no society has ever had or could have; but their aim was not to be correct; their aim was to divert the public."

And those are not the words of Nonnotte, nor of Patouillet, but of Voltaire, in the *Siècle de Louis XIV*.

In one of Turgenev's novels there is a character to whom some one says: "One must be just," and who replies, "I don't see the necessity." This man displayed a certain frankness. But, without admitting it to ourselves, we find it very difficult to do justice to our enemies. Fanatics find it more difficult than other men. And Pascal was a fanatic. He overwhelmed the Jesuit Lalouère with derision and insulting suspicions. And Lalouère deserved better treatment, for he had applied himself to solve the difficult problems of the cycloid. But it would have cost Pascal too much to admit that a Jesuit could be a good geometrician. This was an extremity which he avoided by insult and calumny.

There never was a more mighty genius than Pascal's. There was never a more wretched one.

As a geometrician he is the equal of the greatest, although he did his utmost to divert his mind from geometry. He made important discoveries in physics, without the least desire to penetrate the secrets of Nature. He was interested only in those which he discovered, and cared nothing for those which others had discovered. He wrote, with the help of extracts with which his friends supplied him, a topical book which should not have survived the quarrel of the monks with which it deals, but which the perfection of art has made immortal. And he despised all the arts, even the art of writing, nor was there any sort of beauty whatever which did not fill him with horror as a principle of concupiscence. A sick man, unable to sleep, he jotted down at night, on scraps of paper, notes for an apology for the Christian religion; and these notes, which were published after his death, and were regarded with suspicion by the Catholics, have for two hundred years been the delight of free-thinkers and sceptics; so much so that this Christian apologist is published and commented upon chiefly by his adversaries: Condorcet (1776), Voltaire (1778), Bossuet (1779), Cousin and Faguère (1842–1844), and Hervet (1852). Here, one must admit, is a strange genius and a fantastic destiny.

We must remember, to begin with, that this prodigy was a sick man and subject to hallucinations. From the age of eighteen to that of thirty-nine, at which he died, he never passed a day without suffering. The four last years of his life, Madame Périer tells us, "were only a continual languor." His malady, the effects of which he felt in his head, involved his nerves and produced serious functional disorders of the senses. He seemed always to see an

abyss on his left, and it appears, from the strange amulet which was found sewn into his clothing, that he sometimes saw flames dancing before his eyes.

And if we reflect that this invalid was the son of a man who believed in witchcraft, and in whom the religious sense was extremely exalted, we shall not be surprised at the profound and gloomy character of his faith. It was a lugubrious faith; it inspired him with a horror of Nature and made him the enemy of himself and the human race.

He lived in a state of filth and would not allow his room to be swept. He reproached himself foolishly for the pleasure which he was capable of deriving from eating, and being by no means indulgent he did not forgive in others what he did not forgive in himself. "When it happened that some one admired the excellence of some dish in his presence," says Madame Périer, "he could not endure it: he called this being sensual."

His excessive purity led him to entertain horrible ideas. If Madame Périer, his sister, said: "I have seen a beautiful woman," he was annoyed, and warned her not to make such remarks before servants or young men, lest she should give them guilty thoughts. He could not endure that children should caress their mother. Fearing the most innocent friendships, he displayed nothing but aversion from his two sisters, Jacqueline and Gilberte, so that they should find no place in a heart that ought to belong solely to God. For the same reason, far from being afflicted by the death of his near relations he rejoiced in it when their death was Christian. He scolded Madame Périer for mourning for her sister, Jacqueline, and for retaining a little human feeling.

Pascal was certainly sincere. He thought as he spoke. He observed the lessons which he gave, but were not these lessons literally those which Orgon received from the devotee who had found a retreat in his house?

For many reasons I do not believe that Molière had any idea of depicting the Jesuits in his *Tartufe*. The best of these reasons is that he would have displeased the king, whom he was extremely eager to please. But I am strongly tempted to believe that he had—and my opinion is daily confirmed—the Jansenists in mind while he was writing his comedy.

It will be said that, at all events, Pascal regarded the poor as members of Jesus Christ and that he gave alms abundantly. Yes, he undoubtedly loved the poor, and he sheltered them under his own roof. But note that he loved them as the libertine loves women, for the advantage that he hoped to derive from them; for it is by loving the poor that one gains Heaven and achieves one's salvation. He found poverty too useful to wish to suppress it. He loved it as he loved vermin and ulcers.

It has been said that this Christian was tormented by doubt. This is imagination on the part of a few troubled spirits of the nineteenth century, who wished to see their own minds mirrored in that of the great Pascal.

M. Joseph Bertrand has too exact and too sure a mind to believe in Pascal's doubts. On this point he is very positive. And at the time when the permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences published his book, M. Sully-Prudhomme, a fellow-member of the Académie française, published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* an essay, perfect in its deductions, in which he easily demonstrated that Pascal

had set his faith in regions that cannot be reached by reason. If there ever was a man who did not subject his faith in deliberation, that man was Pascal. He has said as much a score of times: reason does not lead to God; sentiment alone leads us to Him.

"If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible. We are incapable of knowing what He is, or whether He is."

And elsewhere:

"This is faith: God sensible to the heart, not to the reason."

And M. Sully-Prudhomme admirably concludes:

"For him the proof of the existence of God is not confided to the faculty of the understanding, but to that of feeling, to the intuition of the heart, in a word to an act of faith."

I believe it has been said, with reference to a contemporary philosopher who combines with unusual powers of speculation the faith of a charcoal-burner, that there are brains which are made with water-tight compartments. The subtlest fluid contained in one department does not find its way into the others.

And once, when an ardent rationalist was expressing to M. Théodule Ribot his amazement that there should be minds thus constituted, the master of experimental philosophy replied, with a gentle smile:

"Nothing is less surprising. Is it not, on the contrary, a highly spiritualistic conception that would seek to establish unity in a human mind? Why do you object to a man being double, triple, or quadruple?"

To explain Pascal's faith we need not even have recourse to the brain in the water-tight compart-

ments, or the double man. Pascal submitted to reason all that seemed to him to belong to the province of reason, and never did a man make more violent use of reason. He did not reason concerning God, having immediately realized that God is not subject to reason. He did not believe in God; that, for him, would have been quite impossible. He gave God his faith, which is quite a different thing to reasoning that He exists. This the mystics and lovers know; he gave Him his heart. He gave Him his heart as the heart is given, without reasoning, without knowing it, without wishing to know, without the power of knowledge. The works of the mystics, and especially the meditations of St. Teresa, throw a good deal of light upon these psychological difficulties. But by a peculiarity which I mentioned a little while back, the commentators of Pascal are most frequently philosophers who have hardly studied the mystics. Thus they believe him unique and singular: being unable to unite him with his great spiritual family.

In the end, those of the faithful who, like Pascal, never call their reason to the aid of their faith are not the most ill-advised. Such assistance is always dangerous. In Pascal the reason, which was formidable, would have destroyed the whole sanctuary at a single blow; but it never entered it.

Kindly, gentle Madame Périer, who has written the life of her brother Blaise in so excellent and discreet a fashion, records one practice of the great man's which has always given me much food for thought. Pascal, withdrawn from the world, used to receive in his bare, fireless room all those who came to converse with him upon religion. Some confided to him their plans for going into retreat.

Others submitted to him their doubts in the matter of faith. To these, in Christian charity, he did not refuse his advice. And at times, if they did not surrender to his first arguments, it was necessary to enter into a regular discussion. Pascal did not much care for these colloquies, in which reason was opposed to faith. In order to sustain such discussions he was careful to wear under his clothes a girdle of iron furnished with nails whose points were directed inwards. At each argument put forward by his opponent he dug the points into his flesh. By this means he avoided all danger and served his neighbour without fear of harming himself.

He never doubted. But he was prudent, and his great fear was that reason might by surprise find its way into the province of faith.

MAURICE BARRÈS

"LE JARDIN DE BÉRÉNICE"

OU are of course acquainted with Dante's *Vita nuova.* It is a little allegorical romance, in which we are conscious of the slender nudity, the fine spareness of early Florentine art. Beneath the dry and, as it were, acid outlines of the figures are hidden a number of complicated symbols. This *Vita nuova* may, strictly speaking, at least by its subtlety, give some idea of the manner of M. Maurice Barrès, who in literature is a Pre-Raphaelite. And it is doubtless thanks to this style and this cast of mind that he has charmed M. Paul Bourget and many more of our most refined writers.

The expressive inertia of the figures, the slightly awkward stiffness of the scenes, which are not linked together, the exquisite little landscapes, hung like tapestries—it is this that I call Pre-Raphaelite and Florentine in M. Barrès' art. But I must not be too insistent. *Le Jardin de Bérénice* is as far removed from the ingenuous symmetry of the *Vita nuova* as M. Barrès' metaphysics from the scholastic philosophy of the thirteenth century. Far from being arranged with exactitude and deduced according to the rules of the syllogism, the new volume is vague and indeterminate. It is an amorphous book. And the indecision of the whole makes a curious contrast with the precise sobriety of the details.

Our young contemporary's works betray, as did Penelope's web of old, a mysterious dread of the completed thing. M. Barrès does not undo his day's work at night. But he is always introducing the unfinished and the unfinishable. For he knows that this gives his work a charm, and he is fertile in artifices. His two first books, *Sous l'œil des barbares* and *An Homme libre,* were conceived in this manner. Unfortunately they were full of complicated and difficult symbolism; and they were appreciated only by the young. There is this nobility in youth, that it can admire without understanding. As we advance in life we like in some degree to grasp the relations of things, which is a great inconvenience. The *Jardin de Bérénice,* which is a sequel to these two volumes, and as it were the third panel of the triptych, seems greatly superior to the others in fineness of its tone and grace of feeling. Still, I warn those austere persons who would read this little book that they run the risk of being shocked in various ways. For in it many of the opinions which are reckoned respectable by human society are gently derided, and M. Barrès is incomparable for his polite manner of offending our sense of decency; I regard him as a rare spirit and an able writer, but I do not by any means stand surety for him as against the chaste reader.

I had a professor, in my youth, a priest, who was a very upright man, but a little shy, who used to punish his pupils' offences not for what they were, but for the degree of malice which he thought had been infused into them. He was indulgent in respect of the instincts and the obscure impulses of the mind or body, and there were among us brutes in whom he overlooked almost anything. On the

other hand, if he discovered a sin which had been committed with industry and interest, he was pitiless. Elegance in evil—that was what he called malice, and he punished it rigorously. If ever M. Barrès feels the need to confess himself, as M. Bourget has already advised him to do, and he comes across my theologian, I predict a penance that will make his hair stand on end. Never did writer sin more calmly, with more elegance, more industry and interest, more out of sheer malice, than the author of the *Jardin de Bérénice*.

He has no instincts, no passions. He is wholly intellectual, a perverse idealist.

Modifying a famous saying of Théophile Gautier's, he has said of himself: "I am a man for whom the outer world does not exist." This must be understood in the metaphysical sense, and if we remind him that here and there he has drawn some very pretty landscapes, he will reply that he has seen them in himself and that they mark the states of his soul. He has further said: "External beauty never really moves me." This is a confession of intellectual perversity. For there is malice in refusing to love visible things and in living exempt from all tenderness toward Nature, all noble idolatry in the face of the splendour of the world. M. Barrès replies once more. "There is no reality for me save pure thought. Souls alone are interesting." Is he then a spiritualist, an exalted mystic, this disdainful young man who despises instinct and feeling? What philosophy or what religion opens the dwellings of men's souls to him? No religion, no philosophy. He neither believes nor hopes. He enters the spiritual kingdom without moral support. Here again is perversity. His youthful master, M. Paul Bourget,

who tries to catechize him a little, said to him lately: "Caring only for the things of the soul, you do not accept faith, which alone gives an ample and profound interpretation of the things of the soul." And M. Bourget preaches by example; at the present moment he is, I am told, becoming extremely spiritual in the sunlight of that golden Sicily that is no longer pagan.

However, it must not be supposed that M. Barrès wanders through the corridors of psychology absolutely without a rule and without a guide. This inquiring person is not altogether impious, although he is very largely so. I said he has no religion. I was wrong. He has a religion, the religion of the Ego, the cult of the intimate self, the contemplation of self, the divine egotism. He regards his own life with wonder and admiration; he is a literary and political Buddha of incomparable distinction. He teaches us worldly wisdom and an elegant detachment from things. He teaches us to seek in ourselves alone for "the inward consolation" and to guard our ego as a treasure. And he wishes this to be regarded as asceticism; he will have it that there is virtue in defending the ego with jealous care against the enterprises of Nature. Charnisso, a Frenchman who was reared in Germany and who, living in Germany, retained a sense of humour, wrote a story with a profound meaning. We perceive, upon reading this story, that it is criminal to sell not merely one's thoughts, but even one's shadow. M. Barrès is fully convinced of the truth of this symbol; he warns us that we should protect ourselves, should belong to ourselves, should remain stable in the flux of things, should realize ourselves persistently amid the diversity of phenomena, and

sell nothing, not even a vain shadow, to God, or the devil, or women.

Here is a moral, and an important moral; an ancient one, moreover. Wilhelm von Humboldt professed and practised it. According to him the principle of morals is that man *should* live for himself, that is, for the complete development of his faculties.

I think I have a fair understanding of the young apostle's gospel. M. Barrès seems to say: "Man, I am he who dreams the universal dream. The world is the pellet of opium that I smoke in my little silver pipe. All that I show you is merely the smoke of my dreams. I am the best and happiest of all men. The wisdom of my Western brothers is limited and uncertain. They believe themselves to be sceptics, when on the other hand they are remarkable for their naïve credulity. People call me Mademoiselle Renan. I am appalled by the weight of the ponderous beliefs that press upon the soul of my spiritual father. M. Renan, whom, for my part, I have very largely invented, is oppressed by all sorts of fidelities, confessions, professions and symbols. But as for me I believe only in Myself. The only thing that troubles me is that my ego presupposes a not-Me; for, after all, if the world is reflected in me the world must nevertheless have a sort of vague reality. But its existence is its own business, not mine. I am quite sufficiently occupied in maintaining the reality of my ego, which is constantly trying to dissolve."

M. Barrès is right. His ego has a peculiar tendency to diffuse itself into the infinite. It is an exquisite ego, but it is delicate, subtle and vague in the extreme. It is made up of subsidences, pertur-

bations and hesitations, and is so complicated that it is an heroic task to keep it under restraint. A perpetual irony subtilizes it and consumes it. It is a fluid but delightful ego, of a disturbing temerity. This thinking ego has the radiance of a nebula, and reminds one of those fragile stars, those comets for which the solicitude of the astronomers constantly fears some terrible celestial adventure. And these are not idle fears. Several of these subtle bodies have been lost in their hyperbolic orbits, and others have been cut in two. There are now two egos, which cannot come together again.

In order to avert such a disaster, M. Barrès has recourse to various expedients. He does not content himself with concentrating his ego in elegant, psychological novels such as *L'Homme Libre* and *Le Jardin de Bérénice*. He acts; he makes experiments. I do not think I shall annoy him if I say that his successful candidature for the Chamber of Deputies was one of these experiments in practical scepticism, and that the deputy for Nancy is an experimentalist in action.

Let us doubt everything; I am quite agreeable; but doubt does not change the conditions of life.

Sceptics or believers, we are imperiously subjected to the same necessities, the necessities of life. This very night, one of the first mild nights of the year, on finishing your book, my dear Barrès, I opened my window, and I gazed at the stars twinkling in the sky, which is now freed from the fogs of winter. And the mystery of these unknown glittering bodies perturbed me once more, and as keenly as ever, for I had just been reading something which was not of a consoling nature. And I mused: Perhaps life as we see it and conceive it here on earth, organic life,

the life of beasts and men, is merely an accident wholly peculiar to this insignificant little world which we call the Earth. Perhaps this least of planets is spoiled, mildewed; and perhaps all that we see upon it, including ourselves, is merely the result of a disease which has corrupted this evil fruit. The meaning of the universe escapes us completely; it may be that we are bacilli, abhorrent to the universal order. It may be . . . But, as Martin says—and he was a wise man—let us cultivate our garden. There is no need to experiment with life. Life should be lived. Let us be simple of heart and let us be men of goodwill; and divine peace will rest upon us.

M. Maurice Barrès has more than once caused serious persons to knit their brows. But over young men he has exercised a sort of fascination. There is no need to be surprised by this. His mind, so unquiet, so unhealthy, so perverted, and spoilt, as we have already noted, by what the theologians call malice, is assuredly not without grace and wealth. He has represented artistically a real moral distress. And this has won for him the sympathy of many of our young men; it has procured for him a sort of tender, tearful admiration. A poet of his own period, who has written a very delightful book of critical essays, M. Le Goffic, verifies M. Barrès' profound influence and explains it in simple terms: "The truth is," he says, "that these books, with their unhealthy art and passion, exhibit in the strongest light the moral habits of a youth which is extremely civilized, habits thinly dispersed among the crowd, it is true, but which, if one were to unite the scattered members, would appear more compact than is imagined."

And, lastly (no man of letters will make a mistake in this respect), M. Barrès possesses the dangerous and penetrating weapon of style. His supple language, at once precise and elusive, has wonderful resources at its disposal. Many a landscape in the *Jardin de Bérénice,* with its rapidly drawn outlines and its infinite perspective, is unforgettable.

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

E was a delightful person. We shall never meet him again, in the days of summer, under the plane-trees of the Luxembourg, which spoke to him of his long-haired youth; we shall never see him again, pale, clean-shaven, with black, nimble eyes, walking in the sunlight with short steps, rolling his cigarette and giving you good-day with little, brief movements, so charming in their abruptness that one could not quite realize that they were human movements; so that those who love the marionettes found in them something of the grace which one would look for in the ideal puppets of the Italian Comedy. We shall never see him again, gliding along noiselessly, discreet and calm, yet enabling one to divine in his whole person an indefinable quality that was rare and exquisite and yet chimerical, which made this old gentleman a fantastic, dreamlike figure, escaped from a Venetian *festa* in the days of Tiepolo.

Never again shall we hear him telling his stories with the finest, keenest wit, speaking a little between his teeth, in a voice that ran upwards at the end of his sentences, and strangely tickled the ear. We shall never again hear him tell us, with sparkling, delicate gaiety, of bygone adventures in letters, love or the theatre, or recalling, in long speeches full of lyrical hyperbole, the rope-dancer and Pierrot, whom he loved more than anything in the world. No more will the young poets repair to that beautiful garden

in the Rue de l'Eperon, where blue camellias bloomed at all seasons, to salute the polished old gentleman whose mind was as rich in flowers as his garden. He was delightful, and he was the most lyrical poet of his age.

It has been noted that the word which he employed most frequently, and which consequently betrayed his habitual state of mind, was the word *lyre*. He was indeed very much a lyric poet. He himself bore witness to the fact when he said, in the *envoi* of a ballade:

> Prince, voilà tous mes secrets,
> Je ne m'entends qu'à la metrique.
> Fils du Dieu qui lance les traits,
> Je suis un poète lyrique.*

Baudelaire, who was his contemporary and his friend, very truly said that the verses of the author of *Les Cariatides* and *Les Stalactites* bear witness to "that intensity of life in which the soul sings, in which it is compelled to sing, like the trees, the birds and the sea." A rare and wonderful state of mind, in which, by a singular privilege, M. de Banville remained without effort for half a century. God in His goodness saw to it that he was born with the soul of a nightingale. We are told that at Font-Georges, near Moulins, where his childhood was passed, he was wont, when tired of playing, to accompany the warbling of the birds upon a red violin. He grew up, happily, under the eye of an elder sister, in that Eden whose memory he has since recalled in the verse-forms of the Renaissance poets:

* Prince, behold all my secret,—I am skilled only in metre.—Son of the god who shoots arrows—I am a lyric poet.

O champs pleins de silence,
Où mon heureuse enfance
Avait des jours encor
Tout filés d'or.

O ma vieille Font-Georges,
Vers qui les rouges-gorges
Et le doux rossignol
Prenaient leur vol!

Maison blanche où la vigne
Tordait en longue ligne
Son feuillage qui boit
Les pleurs du toit!*

But the miraculous thing is that Théodore de Banville played upon the red violin of Font-Georges until he drew his last breath. For nearly fifty years the poet filled our ears with the music of the scarlet violin with the sonorous heart, which knew nothing of life but its joy. The most skilful critic of symbolism has admirably said of the poet who has just died: "As a poet, joy is his, the joy of ideas, the joy of colour and of sounds, the supreme joy of rhyme and metre." And to this encomium from the pen of M. Charles Morice we may add that this childlike joy, the joy of a singing-bird, was more troubled by reflection.

Théodore de Banville is perhaps of all poets he who has pondered least over the nature of things and the condition of human beings. Consisting of an absolute ignorance of universal laws, his optimism

* O meadows full of silence,—Where my happy childhood—knew days that were still—all threaded with gold?

O my old Font-Georges,—toward which the robins—and the sweet nightingale—took flight!

White house on which the vine—twisted in long lines—its leafage that drank—the tears of the roofs!

was immovable and perfect. Never for a moment did the bitter taste of life and death rise to the lips of this charming assembler of words.

It is true that he loved, sought and found the beautiful. But for him beauty did not result from the intimate structure of things or persons, and from the harmony of ideas; it was, to his thinking, an ingeniously wrought veil to be thrown over the reality, a coverlet, a glittering cloth to cover Cybele's couch and table. His charming infirmity was always to tint the world with many colours, with the hues of mother-of-pearl, to regard Nature with a wonder-working gaze that flooded all things with azure and tender rose. We must suppose that one day long ago, in a park dear to lovers, a little Cupid, hidden beneath a myrtle in which doves were making love, brushed with the tip of his wing the glasses which Providence was about to place on M. de Banville's nose; for otherwise M. de Banville could not have seen only pleasing things in this world; certain spectacles must have given him an idea of evil and suffering, of which he always remained ignorant; without these glasses M. de Banville could not have seen the tremendous six days' work under the gracious aspect which it has always revealed to him; he could not have seen it bright and airy as Armida's ballet. If, in his Biblical heaven, the ancient Javeh ever conceives the whim of reading M. de Banville's descriptive verses, he will never recognize, under so many ornaments, his rude creation, nourished with blood and tears. He will close the book at the tenth page, and cry: "By Lucifer! I did not make the earth as pleasant as that! This poet, who sings better than my seraphim, visibly exaggerates the elegance of my work." I have often

told you of my professor of rhetoric; it is a ridiculous habit into which I generally lapse after a day-dream of greater length than usual. I must have been dreaming as I wrote these obituary notes. For I remember very clearly that my professor of rhetoric, a learned and highly intelligent man, read to us one day in class a passage from the *Génie du Christianisme* in which Chateaubriand says that he saw three blue eggs in a blackbird's nest. My professor stopped in the middle of his reading to ask us, in that good faith which was the foundation of his character, whether blackbirds' eggs looked blue to us.

"To my eyes," he said, "they are grey."

He mused for a moment, then repeated several times: "They are grey! They are grey!"

Then he added, with a sigh: "Chateaubriand was extremely fortunate to see them blue!"

My professor was right; the poets are fortunate; they dwell in an enchanted world; they see everything azure or rose-colour. As much as any of them, and more, M. de Banville had this good fortune.

In this world of ours, through which so many vulgar or lamentable forms are passing, M. Théodore de Banville saw principally gods and goddesses. The Venuses whom he saw had tresses "with fine golden gleams, and their beautiful pointed breasts revealed veins of a pale azure."

They are not Greeks. The Venus of the Hellenes is too pale. And she has committed the crime of being a geometrician and a metaphysician. Thought revolves within her lovely head with the exactitude of a planet traversing the Zodiac. She meditates upon the force that creates the worlds and maintains harmony in them. M. de Banville's Venuses are Venetian. They do not know a word of mythology.

They are akin to those figures of which the painters say that they *plafonnent;* that is, they are flat, they do not stand out from the wall or ceiling.

The poet's Olympus is an Olympus of banqueting-halls and ballrooms. Clad in heroic carnival costume, the knights and ladies go by two by two, gracefully dancing under the painted dome to the sound of soft music. This is the poetic world of M. Théodore de Banville.

There is nothing in it to speak to the heart, nothing to perturb the soul. No bitterness corrupts the sweetness which one drinks in with one's eyes and ears. Sometimes the *festa* is held in Watteau's "Cythera," sometimes in a lilac-scented garden, and tight-rope walkers and rope-dancers take part in it; sometimes even it is held in booths of the fair. There, after a thousand wonderful tricks:

> Enfin, de son vil échafaud
> Le clown sauta si haut, si haut
> Qu'il creva le plafond de toile,
> Au son du cor et du tambour,
> Et le cœur dévoré d'amour
> Alla rouler dans les étoiles.*

Théodore de Banville, who thus set a clown in heaven like a new constellation, beside Perseus and Andromeda, valued in these virtuosi of dislocation the qualities of suppleness and imagination which he himself possessed in the highest degree, as a rope-dancing poet. For this lyric poet was, in his poetry, when he pleased, an unequalled clown. Our old Scarron is but a clog-dancer beside him. That

* At length, from his low stage—the clown leaped so high, so high—that he burst the cloth of the ceiling,—to the sound of the horn and the drum—and his heart, devoured by love, went to roll among the stars.

Théodore de Banville has invented a comic species of rhythm and a comic manner of rhyming individual to himself has been denied, no doubt correctly. For that matter, no one ever invents anything. But that this rare poet has most happily and abundantly practised this art of lyric buffoonery cannot be denied. The truth is that this forgotten manner which in our ancient literature is known as burlesque has been renewed, transformed and embellished by our poet; he has made it his own in all its branches; so much so that one may say that he has created a manner of his own. The *Odes funambulesques* and *Les Occidentales* are perhaps the most original things that Théodore de Banville has written. What man of letters is there who is unacquainted with, who does not still try to relish that innocent, amiable, smiling satire, which lends grace to caricature and style to frivolity, that folly which still retains, after twenty and thirty years, an air of youth; that Muse who is still in some degree the Muse of Aristophanes' choruses, and who, while amusing herself with the frolicsome tricks of a schoolgirl, unfurls the wings of Victory?

When Théodore de Banville is not the rope-dancing poet he is the poet's poet, the supreme virtuoso. It has justly been said that he was the last of the romantics and the first of the Parnassians. He took Hugo's verse, made it supple, broke it asunder, drew it out to excess and lit it up with resplendent rhymes.

During the second portion of his life and work M. de Banville applied himself to restoring the old rigid poetical forms: rondeau, ballade, chant royal, lay and virelay. He displayed in these reproductions a dexterity by no means common and all the

technical skill of a poetic Viollet-le-Duc. One might philosophize at length upon attempts of this kind. They are, it may be, only an amusement; but we cannot deny that it is a graceful amusement.

He has expounded his poetical theories in a little manual of poetry which one reads with pleasure, but which does not give evidence of very much knowledge or reflection. It is the work of a nightingale turned metaphysician. After all, the theory of French verse is difficult and obscure, and it is not perhaps the poets' business to construct it.

It would be unpardonable, even in these obituary notes, to overlook the fact that M. de Banville has provided the theatre with plays that have been applauded. *Gringoire* has remained on the repertory of the Comédie-Française.

It must also be mentioned that M. de Banville has written tales in prose, and even—quite recently—a short novel, *Marcelle Rabe*. In this connection I find, in a graceful collection of criticisms which has lately appeared, *Profils et Portraits,* some very true remarks relating to Théodore de Banville's *Contes héroïques* and *Contes féeriques*. "In these tales," says M. Marcel Fouquier, "it sometimes happens that the thought is too well dressed, with an elegance that is almost obtrusive. The glitter of the embroideries or the richness of the fabric are such that one can no longer distinguish the fine, strong weft of the narrative. But this weft is there, none the less, and the psychology of these tales, when they are not merely modern fairy tales, is often curiously dramatic or of a varied interest." I may add that this psychology is sometimes curiously unreasonable. But it is by no means a reproach to the memory of Théodore de Banville, who was so fair a

child of God that he had no need of reason to be lovable. He died young at the age of sixty-eight; he was a poet. May his tomb be white and smiling! Let a lyre be carved upon it and let a young laurel be planted there!

M. GASTON BOISSIER

"THE CHURCH AND LETTERS IN THE FOURTH CENTURY" *

AVING studied the Roman world in a sequence of works which, rightly, are highly esteemed, from Cæsar and Cicero to Marcus Aurelius and Fronto, † M. Gaston Boissier was naturally led to consider the spiritual movements of the troublous period which extends from Constantine to the fall of the Empire. This is the subject of his recent volume, *La fin du paganisme,* which is in no way inferior to its predecessors, neither in the interest of the questions which are considered in it, nor in the ingenious good sense of its ideas, nor in the pleasant ease of its style, and which offers the great public of literary or curious readers a great many novel lines of enquiry. Taking the Christian Church at its triumph, that is at almost the point at which M. Renan left it in the seventh and last volume of his *Origines,* M. Gaston Boissier follows it in its relations with the ancient Empire upon which it had at last imposed itself, in its struggle with Paganism, which

* *La fin du paganisme. Étude sur les dernières lettres religieuses en Occident an quatrième siècle,* by Gaston Boissier, 2 vols. in 8vo. Hachette.

† *Cicéron et ses amis,* 1 vol.; *Promenades archéologiques, Rome et Pompéi,* 1 vol.; *Nouvelles Promenades archéologiques, Horace et Virgile,* 1 vol.; *L'Opposition sous les Césars,* 1 vol.; *La Religion romaine, d'Auguste aux Antonius,* 2 vols.

perishes not without majesty, and above all in the accommodation, which was then taking place, of the old ideas to the new cult. He has intentionally left political events in the shadow, sending us, for the sequence of facts, to the histories of the Duc de Broglie and M. Victor Duruy; on the other hand, he has applied himself to demonstrating the relations between the Church and scholastic philosophy; to exhibiting, if I may say so, the Latinization of the Galilæans. The better to prosecute this important and, on the whole, novel enquiry he has more especially interrogated those writers who could best inform him: Christian or Pagan poets, philosophers, polemists or apologists, and, to use his own expression, he has asked literature to give lessons in history. This he has done with dexterous curiosity. In him the humanist takes precedence of the historian and gladly brings to history the contribution of literature. It is by the examination of books that he has sounded morals, ideas and feelings to the quick. He excels in wresting the secret of men's souls from the writings which he analyses. Thus to make life emerge from the pages that were seemingly dead—what a delightful task! And if we afterwards perceive that these refined analyses are not always connected one with another by very strong ties, if we are sometimes sensible of a lack of sequence and continuity, if we realize in the end that we are not travelling across a large continent, but are rather leaping from island to island, we must nevertheless admit that M. Boissier has so well scattered his Cyclades, has planted them with so much reason and taste, that the journey is no less instructive and no less agreeable. This is praise that all will accord him. He deserves even greater and higher praise.

He is tolerant and moderate; but only the tolerant and the moderate will be able to congratulate him on this count. For my part, I have an infinite relish for the benevolent firmness of his mind. In historical matters he is neither Christian nor Pagan; his only prepossessions are those of wisdom and moderation. Without always admitting that he is right I always find him reasonable, and the great proof that he is an honest historian is that one is almost vexed with oneself because one is not always of his opinion. However, I cannot help feeling that he is too indulgent to Constantine, although he is less so than the Duc de Broglie. On the other hand, I think he is hard upon Julian. This is a subject upon which I must not dwell too long.

I shall return to it, for it attracts me. Again, M. Boissier displays an excessive disdain for the Manichæans, no doubt because they maintained, here and there, a few absurdities of too obvious a nature. He does not sufficiently consider that they were theologians. He is astonished that St. Augustine could have been a Manichæan, as though there were nothing in Manichæism that could attract an African rhetorician of a subtle and barbaric mind never happier than when he had to reason in despite of all reason, and who was, moreover, the boldest genius of his time and one of the greatest minds of the whole human race. But we will leave the Manichæans, who have no particular business here. If M. Gaston Boissier handles Constantine tenderly, we see plainly, nevertheless, that Constantine is not a sovereign after his own heart; we see plainly that he does not approve of the violent measures which followed the edict of Milan. The emperor whose policy has all his preferences is Valentinian I, who

assured the religious peace of the Empire. Valentinian was a zealous Christian, a hard and ignorant man, who lived, it was said, in the company of two tame she-bears. But he did not persecute his subjects for their faith, except perhaps the Arians. The peace enforced by this ruler's wisdom lasted eighteen years, during which Christians and Pagans alike had access to high office. Colleagues in the same magistracies, associated in the same public affairs or business ventures, sitting on the same councils, they learned to tolerate one another and forgot their religious quarrels. Toleration very quickly led to concord. This peace of Valentinian has inspired M. Boissier with some admirable reflections which deserve to be quoted in their entirety:

Valentinian's council must have resembled that of many of the sovereigns of our days. Men of different religion were to be seen sitting on it together, occupying similar magistracies, associated in the same affairs. We regard it as a great victory for common-sense, which has cost centuries of conflict, that at last those who are admitted to public office are no longer called to account for the cult which they profess, by adhering to which they are liable to be set apart from all the rest, provided they are united by the desire to be of service to their country. But the Romans of the fourth century reached this stage at a stroke. Necessity forced them to find some sort of common ground on which men of all parties could unite: and this was the service of the State, to which resolute Pagans, such as Symmacus or Ricomer, and pious Christians, like Probus, or Mallius Theodorus, consecrated their life with a devotion and fidelity which were never belied.

At heart these eminent persons scarcely loved one another; but the habit of intercourse, of sitting on the same councils, of working at the same tasks, had led to a sort of understanding between them, a mutual tolerance by which the Empire would have profited greatly had it understood how to make use of it. For a long time it was believed that a country could not exist in strength

and unity unless all the citizens shared the same beliefs. To-day we consider that even if they are divided between different creeds they can understand one another and unite when the common weal is in question, and that the diversity of cults is not a necessary cause of a diminished national feeling. This is the condition of most modern States; it does not affect their prosperity and there was no reason why the Roman Empire should be worse off in this respect.

The spirit of toleration to which this passage testifies inspires the whole book. But M. Gaston Boissier is visibly gratified when this spirit inclines to the side of the Christians. For, complete Ciceronian though he is, he loves them and it is perhaps they whom he prefers in secret, always provided that they are not too deficient in grammar and prosody.

The great patrician bishops and scholars of the fourth century, who were lacking neither in polish nor in policy, please him most of all, and he gives us admirable portraits of them. Having ascertained that one of them, Saint Ambrose, defended one day, by chance, the liberty of the conscience, he does not fail to throw this attitude into relief, in a fashion that is, by the way, rather clever. It was in his famous polemic with Symmacus on the subject of that statue of Victory which the Emperor had had removed from the Senate. The Pagan senators who were accustomed to burn incense upon an altar set before the goddess demanded the re-erection of the statue. They were numerous and were even at times in the majority.

Saint Ambrose, a very upright man but to my thinking a bit of an iconoclast, declared that if the idol had been removed it was in the name of the liberty of belief that the government had taken this equitable measure. "Was it indeed just," he said, "that the Christian senators should be forced to

witness ceremonies which they held in detestation? Why should anyone seek to force them to witness them, unless it were to make them accomplices?"

And having quoted these words, our historian takes pleasure in showing us that the Bishop of Milan here invokes an argument which has been very largely revived in our days by our free-thinkers, who cannot endure to see religious emblems outside the churches, their pretext being that such emblems are an insult to those who profess other beliefs or even to those who profess none. And thus, with just a spice of malice, he ranges Saint Ambrose on the side of the most modern and most impetuous defenders of the liberty of the conscience.

It will be seen from these examples that M. Boissier does not fear those comparisons between the present and the past which are so abundant in the historical works of M. Ernest Renan and are permitted even to the most severe of archæologists, for we find several in M. Théodore Reinach's *Mithridate*.

We have hinted at the spirit in which the book is written. It is time to describe more plainly its principal subject, which is, as far as one can express it in so few words, the adaptation of the ancient Pagan culture to the requirements of triumphant Christianity. The first generations of Christians had no culture of any sort. The faith in the Crucified spread at first among the lowly and simple, among very insignificant folk who were despised by a proud and ancient society. These ignorant persons had, it is true, some exquisite little books. The canonical Gospels have a delightful savour which we relish greatly to-day, but which would have nauseated a Pliny or a Seneca. The aristocracy of the Roman

world, formed by the scholastic philosophers, expert in rhetoric, nourished upon the masterpieces of antiquity, could not have listened without disgust to the barbarous language of a Luke or a Matthew. To us this seems very strange. Yet if we enquire how long the literary merit of the Gospels has been recognized, we shall perhaps discover that it is only during the last ninety years or so. In the Middle Ages people paid no attention to this sort of merit; and a pious man of the seventeenth or eighteenth century would have been greatly surprised if one had told him that these sacred books were also literary monuments of some value. The fashionable world despised these poor creatures who tasted in secret the refreshing virtues of their Christ and awaited the reign of God upon earth. "There is," said Celsus, "a new race of men, born yesterday, without country or ancient traditions, leagued against all civil and religious institutions, persecuted by justice, generally branded with infamy and glorying in the common execration; these are the Christians." Wretches thus treated could not suffer very greatly from the humble nature of their literature. But when Christianity had penetrated the upper classes of society and made proselytes among the advocates and orators, those who directed its affairs found themselves in a great quandary. The new cult had no schools and could have none. How instruct the Christian youth? Send them to the Pagan schools? There they commented upon books full of the abominable history of the gods. But to leave the sons of rich Christian families in ignorance of profane letters was to degrade them to the level of the *plebs,* to deprive them of the hope of obtaining dignities, to abase them from the rank in which

their birth placed them, and thus to give the Pagans the advantage in the matter of office and of power. Such a course would have been idiotic. No Christian teacher, not even Tertullian, counselled its adoption. The wealthy Christian children went to school, and there they learned, under the master's cane, side by side with the little Pagans, the lies of the poets. It is difficult to imagine what the schools were in those days, and what importance good Roman society attached to grammar, rhetoric and poetry. These Romans of the decadence, who were in reality much more refined, more upright, more candid and more virtuous than we suppose, guarded with a sort of piety the intellectual treasury which they could no longer increase. They were extremely literary and in all good faith believed that there is no occupation more worthy of an upright man than that of making long phrases or little poems. In the fourth century the grand style and rhetoric led to everything, even to empire. One could not resist them if one were an honest man; and the Christians of all people had become honest men. "The Church, all-powerful," says M. Boissier, "made no attempt to create a new system of education which should be entirely in conformity with its doctrines."

Emerging from the Pagan schools, the Christians had no particular fashion of writing, and except where they affected a popular style in order to be understood by the ignorant, they continued, as did the Pagans, the old literature of Rome. They imitated Cicero in their dialogues and Virgil in their poems. In the third century, it is true, a Christian, perhaps a bishop, the poet Commodian, composed some popular works in verse in which rhythm replaced measure, and which owed nothing to the

schools. But his example was not followed, and Christian poetry flowed into the ancient mould, as M. Boissier shows us by the instances of St. Paulinus of Nolus and Prudentius.

We may say that the Church triumphant was vanquished by scholastic philosophy. This victory of letters and the genius of antiquity had incalculable consequences. It saved a precious portion of the riches of the human intellect. It did not prevent the barbarian nature, the protracted uncouthness of the new societies. But by conserving tradition it assured the revenge of the Muses on that day when the Apollo of the ancients was once again to gain the ascendancy over the Galilean in Italy, in Rome and even in the palace of the Pope, himself a convert to the Paganism of the arts. It rendered possible the Italian renaissance and the French renaissance, and the masterpieces of that classic century in which a bishop related the adventure of Ulysses' son.

What is it, then, this antique beauty that nothing has been able to vanquish, and that only slumbered when men thought it dead? It is said that in Rome, on the 18th April, 1485, some Lombard workmen, who were excavating the soil on the Appian Way, uncovered a tomb of white marble. The cover being raised, they found a young virgin who, as a result of aromatic essences or by some prodigy of ancient magic, was lying uncorrupted in this faithful bed. Her cheeks were rosy and smiling; her hair flowed in long waves over her white bosom. The people, stirred with enthusiasm and love, bore the virgin in her marble bed to the Capitol, where all the city came to gaze upon her in silence, for, says the chronicler, "her beauty was a thousand times greater than that of the women of our time." In

short, Rome was so deeply moved by the sight of this virgin whose divine form was triumphant over death that the Pope became uneasy, and, fearing lest a Pagan and impious cult should come to life at the feet of this exhumed loveliness, he had her removed by night and buried in secret. But not in vain had men gazed for a moment upon her countenance.

She was the beauty of the ancient world; and the earth, having only caught a glimpse of her, broke into blossom anew. At once the renaissance of letters and the arts began. M. Gaston Boissier, who is before all things a humanist, will forgive me if this beautiful symbol has occurred to a mind still wholly occupied with the *Fin de paganisme*.

THE EMPEROR JULIAN *

IN our last essay we considered M. Gaston Boissier's book as a whole. To-day I should like to reopen this admirable work and linger a little over the pages dedicated by the humanistic historian to the political and religious work of the Emperor Julian. Julian was truly an extraordinary man. He was quite a child when Constantine, his uncle, died; escaping alone, with Gallus, from the massacre of his whole family. He grew up in the dismal, relaxing prison of Cæsarea, where he was kept by Constans, who could not make up his mind either to let him live or put him to death. This life, the life of an Oriental prince, should have made him imbecile and cruel. Gallus could not resist it; he became stupid, stultified. Julian emerged from it intelligent and kindly, active and chaste, as if he had been reared among the Stoics. Nothing is more capricious than despotism. Constans allowed Julian, now a man, to study in Athens and Constantinople. But the young prince's life was constantly menaced: he might expect at any moment either death or the purple. He received the purple. He owed it to the Empress, the wise and beautiful Eusebia, who loved him. She was able to obtain for him, from the feeble Constans, the title of Cæsar and the government of the Gauls. The nature of the sentiment which united Eusebia

* Suggested by the book examined in the preceding article: *La fin du paganisme. Étude sur les dernières lettres religieuses en Occidents au IV^e siècle,* by Gaston Boissier, 2 vols. in-8vo.

and Julian can scarcely be doubted. But of all men who have owed their fortune to love, Julian is perhaps he who took least pains to please women. Eusebia must have had tastes somewhat unusual in her sex to have attached herself to so austere a young man. Julian, small and thick-set, was not handsome, and he affected, by his deliberate negligence, to make his person more uncomely than it naturally was. He wore a goat's beard through which the comb was never passed. It was his weakness to believe that a beard is philosophic when it is dirty. He neglected to get his hair cut. His nails were black and his hands spotted with ink, and he boasted of this. His affectation, innocent after all, was to appear uncouth, awkward and countrified. He even compared himself complacently to the surly butt of the comedies. As his family was of Mœsian origin he loved to say that he was a savage, a true peasant of the Ister. Such as he was, Eusebia loved him. It was to her that he owed life and power. And when he left for the Gauls she made him a present which gratified him more than the purple. She gave him books, a whole vast library of poets and philosophers. Julian was grateful to her, and when he composed his panegyric of the Empress he was careful not to forget a liberality which he had found so sweet. "Eusebia," he said, "gave me such a quantity of books that I had that which fully satisfied my desire, however insatiable my avidity for this commerce of the mind, and thus Gaul and Germany became for me a museum of Hellenic letters. Constantly attached to this treasure, I could not forget the hand that gave it to me. When I am on an expedition one of these books never fails to follow me as part of my military baggage."

This youthful Cæsar, bookworm and philosopher, who had relinquished with regret the short mantle of the Athenians, made at first a laughable soldier. Marching with a stoop, his eyes on the ground, like a scholar, he had great difficulty in keeping step to the Pyrrhic marches, and while, girt with the cuirass, he went about his military duties, he would murmur between his teeth: "The thing fits me as a saddle would fit an ox!" And at intervals he would sigh: "O Plato!" In short, he was, as the good Ammianus Marcellinus says, a youthful pupil of the Muses, reared, a new Erectheus, in the lap of Minerva, in the peaceful shade of the Academy. But he had a powerful and ingenious mind; after a few weeks he became a hardy soldier, an able commander. His campaigns in Germany are worthy of a Trajan. In four years Julian three times crossed the Rhine, freed twenty thousand Roman prisoners, reduced two-score fortified cities and made himself master of the whole country. Yet he remained the Athenian scholar, the disciple of the philosophers. He went from city to city revealing to the barbarians his gentleness and simplicity. In his dear Lutetia, where he had established his headquarters, he led that life of meditation and austerity which, according to his neo-Platonic masters, is the excellent life. He fasted and prayed to be worthy to have commerce with the gods, and he had, in fact, visions, which Ammianus Marcellinus has recorded. It was there, in the palace of the Thermæ, whose ruins to-day hear the nightly songs of the students, that Julian was proclaimed Augustus by his soldiers. In default of a more appropriate crown they offered Julian a woman's diadem, which he rejected with the gentle disdain of a philosopher. He was then proferred the

"front" of a horse's bridle, but of this too he would have none. The soldiers were much embarrassed, when a spearman, unfastening his standard bearer's collar, placed it on the head of the new Augustus.

The death of Constans having occurred in time to obviate civil war, Julian, recognized by the whole Empire, had not to fight Augustus, but to bury him.

It is related that one day, in a city whose name I have forgotten, while Julian, recently invested with the purple, was passing through the streets amidst the acclamations of the people, an old blind woman, lifting her arms toward the young Cæsar, cried in a prophetic voice: "Behold him who shall restore the temples of the gods!" Julian was then a Christian, like his father. By Constans' orders he had been reared from infancy in an atmosphere of Galilean piety; he had even received the minor orders and read the Gospel to the people in the church of Cæsarea. Nevertheless, the woman was right, and some pious enemy of the Christians, Libanius or Maximus of Ephesus, might proclaim her to be inspired by Heaven, or believe that Minerva herself, as in the days of Homer, had assumed the likeness of a mortal to encourage her friend in wisdom. Julian, raised to empire, was to accomplish in his brilliant reign of a few months what the old woman had announced. He had never been a Galilean but perforce, and when quite young he had detested Christianity as the religion of his oppressors and the murderers of his whole family. While at Nicomedia he frequented the tombs of the martyrs, he meditated on the mysteries of the kindly goddess and the divinity of the Sun. A Christian in appearance, he was a Hellenist at heart. "He was," says Libanius, "contrary to the fable, the lion who wore the ass's

skin." And Libanius says further that Julian, having become Augustus, broke like a raging lion all the ties that bound him to Christianity.

It is not possible to ascertain the exact numbers of the Christians and the Pagans of the Empire on Julian's accession. We may suppose that in Egypt and the whole African province the numerical forces of the Galileans and the Hellenizers were more or less equal. It is certain that in Asia, on the other hand, the population of the towns was, as regards the great majority, Christian. In Syria, in Pontus, in Cappadocia, in Galatia the peasants themselves were Christians. In Europe Christianity had hardly penetrated the rural districts; there the *pagus,* the village, remained idolatrous, and was to give its latest name to the old abolished religion. But the rustic cults of Italy and Gaul had nothing in common with the learned mysticism of the rhetoricians and the Hellenizing philosophers. As for the cities of the West, those that spoke the Greek tongue were inclined to be Galilean, and those that spoke Latin Pagan. But this is a distinction which could not be very strictly maintained. To sum up, the Christians were without a doubt more numerous than the Hellenists and the Pagans combined.

They held the public offices, making way for the Hellenists only in the schools of philosophy, which were, it is true, a great power in the society of the fourth century. Things being as they were, a politic man would not have re-erected the altars overthrown by Constantine. But Julian was not a politic person. He was a believer, and even an *illuminé.* He reestablished the ancient cult and the sacrifices for love of the gods, not in consideration of men. A profound theologian and an austere moralist, he acted

in accordance with the promptings of his conscience, and the impulses of a faith exalted by fasting and insomnia. He did not sleep. At night hardly had he stretched himself on his couch of coarse matting than he rose to write or meditate. One shudders to think of an emperor who never sleeps. His writings bear evidence of his mystic exaltation. Here is what he tells us in one of his little theological treatises:

"From my childhood I was seized with a violent love for the rays of the divine star. When quite young I uplifted my spirit toward the ethereal light; and not only did I desire to fix my gaze upon it during the day, but even at night, beneath a pure, serene sky, I left everything to admire the celestial beauties. Absorbed in this contemplation I no longer heard those who were speaking to me, and I lost consciousness of myself."

No one will contest the sincerity of these effusions. Julian was a religious man. As to this there is no doubt. There is less agreement as to the character of the religion which he professed. M. Gaston Boissier is inclined to regard it as a new, artificial cult, which Julian had invented, drawing it, dogma by dogma, from his heated brain. But one does not see how a cult of this kind could have been installed in a few months. I believe, on the contrary, that Julian restored the old religion in the form which it had then assumed.

This religion was by no means Paganism, if by that we understand the popular idolatry; nor was it polytheism, long since replaced, in the minds of cultivated Romans, by the conception of the one God and a Divine Providence. It was Hellenism, to give it the name by which it was referred to at

the time. Julian was a subtle theologian; following the example of his masters, he ingeniously interpreted the ancient myths. He was not in the least degree an innovator. His ideas concerning the Sun and the Mother of the Gods are derived from Porphyry and Iamblichus. In various passages of his writings he makes manifest his intention not to depart from the doctrines of Iamblichus. "Let us follow," he says, "in the recent footsteps of a man whom after the gods I revere and admire as the equal of Aristotle and Plato." And elsewhere: "Take the writings of the divine Iamblichus and you will find in them the height of human wisdom." Now, Porphyry and Iamblichus were not merely neo-Platonic philosophers; they were also thaumaturgi and magians. When they prayed, their bodies rose more than ten cubits from the ground, and their faces, as well as their vestments, became refulgent with golden light. These neo-Platonists gave the religions of Greece their latest fantastic and scholarly form. It was this form that Julian re-established. He restored it, but did not invent it. We are forced to realize that at this moment of human history a religious mind was constrained to choose between the mysticism of the neo-Platonists and Christian dogmatism. And if we compare these two manners of envisaging the divine we very soon perceive that they do not differ so greatly as the theologians have supposed. Without claiming, with that strange and able writer, Émile Lamé, that Julian was more Christian than the Christians, we must admit that the Apostate very closely approached, both in morals and in doctrine, the Church which he sought to destroy, and which, triumphant, anathematized his memory for fourteen centuries. It is not

true that Julian left the Christians, as M. Boissier says, "the advantage of that sole universal God Who watches over all the nations without distinction and without preference." The triune god of Julian, on the contrary, very closely resembles the Trinity of St. Athanasius and the Hellenizing Christians. Julian and Libanius were Platonists; so were the Basils and the Athanasiuses. What, after all, did this wayward, upright Julian do, if it was not to replace the Christian Trinity by the Alexandrian triad, the One God of the Christians by the one god of the philosophers, the Logos or Word, the Son, by the sun-king, the Scriptures and revelation by the explanation of the myths, baptism by the initiation into the mysteries, the eternal beatitude of the Saints by the immortality of the heroes and sages? These ideas, seen from a distance, are like sisters that resemble one another yet do not recognize one another. And if we consider Julian's morality we are further struck by the fact that the same ideal of poverty, chastity and asceticism flows from the Alexandrian and the Galilean sources. The Apostate lived like a saint. Ammianus Marcellinus, who was a witness of his whole life, tells us that after the death of his wife Helena he remained a stranger to all carnal intercourse. "This continence," adds the gentle Ammianus, "was greatly favoured by the privations of sleep and nourishment which he imposed upon himself, and observed in his palace as strictly as in camp."

Like a Father of the Church, Julian professedly hated and avoided the games of the circus. He thought it shameful to watch the dancing of women and of young boys as beautiful as women. He slept on a mat, like an ascetic, and even the neglected

state of his beard and nails savours, in him, of Christian virtue.

Nevertheless Hellenism, supple in its dogmas, ingenious in its philosophy, poetical in its traditions, would perhaps have coloured the human soul with sweet and varied hues, and what the modern world would have been had it lived beneath the mantle of the kindly goddess and not in the shadow of the Cross is a great problem. Unhappily this problem is insoluble. Julian did not succeed; his work perished with him. With it collapsed the hopes that Libanius expressed with noble, frank enthusiasm, when he cried:

"Behold us verily restored to life; a breath of happiness passes over all the earth, now that a veritable god, in the seeming of a man, governs the world; now that the fires are rekindled on the altars and the air is purified by smoke of sacrifices."

It is at least permissible to inquire whether Julian's attempt was as crazy as has been reported. It seems that it was not unsuccessful at the outset. The enthusiasm in the cities was great, and the Emperor was obliged to prohibit by edict the applause which greeted his entry into the temples. As under Constantine, but in a contrary sense, there were numerous conversions, among others that of Pegasus, Bishop of Ilion. These results were obtained during a reign so short that one must reckon it not by years, but by months. It is certain, on the other hand, that fresh difficulties arose from day to day, and that the situation was less favourable at the time of Julian's death than on his accession. But it must not be said that the attempt was

an impossible one. As to this, we know nothing. For that matter, was it so inopportune in a society that was feeling the imperious need of a universal religion, and which was beginning to grow weary of the incessant disputes of the Christian sects?

If Julian was mistaken (and in the long run he was mistaken, since he did not succeed) he was at least mistaken like an upright man. We have seen that he was sincere. He combined tolerance with faith; and that is a rare alliance. It is true that his moderation has been disputed. The Duc de Broglie has sought to make Julian a persecutor; but the difficulty which he experiences is the sign, in so able an historian, of a false situation. Julian always showed himself to be opposed to violent measures, and in this respect is unique in the Roman world.

"I have resolved," he says, "to employ gentleness and humanity toward the Galileans; I forbid any recourse to violence; no one shall be dragged into a temple or forced to commit any action against his will."

He never gave the lie to these noble words, and he said again, shortly before his end:

"It is by reason that one must convince and instruct men, not by blows, insults and torture. I therefore conjure those who are zealous for the true religion never to do any injury to the sect of the Galileans, nor to permit any assault or violence against them. One should feel pity more than hatred for people so unfortunate as to be mistaken in matters so important."

What is so interesting in Julian is that he is at the

same time an exalted believer and a philosopher full of humanity. He has afforded the world the unique spectacle of a tolerant fanatic.

Partial and compliant, this Emperor had recourse, in his defence of orthodoxy, to the subtleties of argument and philosophic irony. He banters those whom he might put to death, and as his scoffing is witty he is called intolerant. Reared amid Roman violence and Byzantine cruelty, he seems to have learned only respect for human life and the cult of thought. He is an Emperor, and to punish his subjects who have offended against him and the gods he writes against them a satire in the style of Lucian's treatises. And he is a very dangerous adversary, for, thorough mystic though he is, and despite his astrology, he has a biting wit.

At the beginning of his rule his ingenious clemency recalled the bishops exiled by Constans. They were Arians, and he unloosed them upon the Church. "For he knew," says Ammianus, "that the Christians are worse than wild beasts when they dispute among themselves." Without persecuting the Christians he did them a great deal of harm by depriving them of the right to teach rhetoric. "Let them leave to the Hellenists," he said, "the task of explaining Homer and Plato, and let them go into the churches of the Galileans to interpret Luke and Matthew." He had the idea—it was a little too ingenious—of rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem in order to give the lie to the prophecies of Jesus Christ. He died amidst the Persians without having realized this scheme. He had subjugated Armenia and Mesopotamia, crossed the Tigris and captured Ctesiphon, when he was mortally wounded in the liver by an arrow. Ammianus Marcellinus, a wit-

ness of his death, has preserved his last words. It is not probable that Julian spoke them as the historian pronounces them, and the speech is possibly entirely suppositious. None the less it expresses Julian's real thoughts, which his biographer had surprised in a prolonged and constant intimacy. It is the testament of this extraordinary man. It does him too much honour to be omitted or abridged:

"My friends and companions, Nature is requiring of me that which she has lent me; I return it to her with the gladness of a debtor who is clearing himself, and not with the grief or remorse which the most part of men think inseparable from the state in which I find myself. Philosophy has convinced me that the soul is truly happy only when it is freed from the bonds of the body, and that we should rejoice rather than grieve when the noblest part of ourselves breaks loose from that which degrades and debases it. I reflect also that the gods have often sent death to good men as the greatest reward with which they could crown their virtue. I receive it as a favour; they wish to spare me the difficulties which might perhaps have worsted me or caused me to commit some action unworthy of myself. I am dying without remorse because I have lived without crime, whether in the days of my disgrace, when I was sent far from the court and kept in obscure and remote retreats, or since I have been raised to empire. I have regarded the power with which I was invested as an emanation of the divine power; I believe I have kept it pure and spotless, ruling with gentleness the peoples confided to my care, and neither declaring nor sustaining war save for good reasons. If I have not succeeded it is because suc-

cess depends upon the will of the gods. Persuaded that the welfare of the peoples is the sole aim of all equitable governments, I have held arbitrary power in detestation, as an inevitable source of corruption of morals and States. I have always loved peace; but since my country has called me and commanded me to bear arms, I have obeyed with the submission of a son to the peremptory orders of a mother. I have cheerfully faced peril. I will not conceal from you the fact that it was foretold a long while ago that I should die a violent death. This is why I thank the eternal God that He has not permitted that I should die beneath the blows of conspirators nor from the sufferings of long sickness nor by the cruelty of a tyrant. I adore His goodness to me in that He takes me from this world by a glorious death in the midst of a glorious undertaking. Also, to judge things sanely, it is equally cowardly to long for death when it would be more fitting to live and to regret life when it is time to die."

Is it not as though one were listening to Marcus Aurelius? If I have attempted to write this too hurried apologia for Julian it is because it seems to me that the Apostate, after having met with scurvy treatment from the ecclesiastical authors, has not found overmuch favour at the hands of the philosophical writers of our own time. Auguste Comte is extremely hard upon him. I heard M. Renan one evening remark, *sub rosa:* "Julian! He was a reactionary!" Perhaps, but as an emperor he was certainly a good man, and as a theologian he was a witty one. He was wrong, I admit, in seeking to retain that which was doomed to irreparable destruction, but did he not display the rarest quali-

ties in the defence of a desperate cause? Lastly, is it nothing to have united beneath the purple the virtues of the philosopher, the pontiff and the soldier?

GYP *

ASSIONNETTE. The word is not in Littré's dictionary, nor in that of the Academy. At least, I have sought for it without finding it in the edition of the year VI, which is the one that I prefer, because it has a charming vignette in the style of Louis XIV, in which we see a cartouche of palms between two vases of flowers in the midst of an historic landscape, and the cartouche bears this inscription in capital letters: "To Immortality." I have not at hand the more recent editions, but I would boldly wager that *passionnette* is not to be found in them. Yet the word is French, and even very French. Why should not the Immortals accept it in the next edition of this dictionary, in which they follow usage, the great teacher of language, their master as well as ours? I should like, in this connection, to present a humble request to M. Camille Doucet, the permanent secretary, who, as a comic poet, cannot fail to perceive how intelligible, expressive and charming this term *passionnette* is. Neither Trévoux nor Furetière was acquainted with it. My old Furetière, to me a source of frequent delight, gives only *passion.* And having cited this example from M. Nicole: "The extraordinary effects of the passions cannot be imitated by the reason," he adds, with that ingenuousness so touching in a scholar:

* *Une Passionnette,* 1 vol. in 8 vo. Calmann Lévy.

"The philosophers are not agreed as to the number of the passions." They would find it equally difficult to agree as to the number of the *passionnettes*. And it would be a task not unworthy of the Forty to give an exact definition of *passionnette*. I propose, in the meantime, the following definition:

Passionnette, n. f., a little passion, said of the intense feeling of a woman of the world for a man of the world. An imperceptible puncture of the heart. Gyp is of opinion that a good woman should die of it.

Madame de Gueldre was truly assured that she would have her *passionnette*. "It will come," a fair and well-informed friend of hers told her; "the *passionnette* will come, and perhaps it will be curiously commonplace, so that you will not understand how or why you have become enamoured of the first comer, who will probably be incapable of understanding you or even of loving you." And these forcible expressions, by which a woman of the world exaggerates the frailty of women, were to be so precisely and literally true of Madame de Gueldre!

She was a charming woman, the Comtesse de Gueldre. Her baptismal name was Auréliane, but her friends called her Liane, and in so doing they gave her the name that befitted her lithe grace. Fair, with fine, fluffy hair, small, slender and wonderfully lissome, she was always dressed in white, wearing plush or velvet in the winter, and in summer muslin or *crêpe de Chine*. She had retained, after her marriage, a reckless innocence which was gradually transformed into a melancholy invested with a courageous gaiety. Abrupt and derisive, yet tender and compassionate, she was full of pity for men and beasts. She could not bear to see even a flower suffer. Highly artistic, she used to paint saints for

the village churches, and when she was alone she was given to singing old-world songs with genuine feeling. She was simple, upright and truthful.

People said of Madame de la Fayette that she was a truthful woman. But she was at once truthful and secretive. She was truthful, but her friends never knew what she was doing, nor, above all, what she was thinking. Madame de Gueldre was not secretive in the same fashion as Madame de la Fayette. She was deficient in prudence, in worldly wisdom, in that spirit of apprehension which is the most apparent virtue of fashionable women. Too careless of opinion, she used her modesty to conceal her virtue.

It was not with her as it was with that lady (I forget where I read this) who used to say: "I am sincere." She said as much one day to some one who knew very well that she could not be wholly sincere, and who asked her:

"What do you mean by sincere?"

"Good heavens, my dear!" she replied; "a sincere woman is a woman who doesn't lie unnecessarily."

Madame de Gueldre had passed her thirtieth year without once finding it necessary to lie. Although she was completely detached from a husband who had very quickly detached himself from her, and had deceived her without delicacy, she had never distinguished or taken particular notice of anyone else. She was greatly courted, but it gave her no pleasure. She had no taste for flirtation and did not like receiving declarations. The mere idea of listening to one made her wretched. If the declaration proceeded from a fatuous or foolish person she was irritated and hurt by it, which proves the delicate

pride of her soul. It is related that a witty lady who is very well accustomed to this despicable form of homage, for her magnificent beauty makes her a conspicuous figure in society, was recently obsessed by a professional seducer, who, after the usual preliminaries, reached the point of declaring that he loved her.

"I saw that a long time ago," she replied, laughing.

"How did you know?"

"Because you became most horribly tedious."

Madame de Gueldre was a woman who might have replied thus. But if the declaration proceeded from a man who was sincere and really moved she was truly grieved by it, fearing above all things in the world to seem a coquette, or unkind and careless of inflicting pain. Hers was a rare and beautiful nature. She was greatly afflicted when M. de Mons told her, in accents that carried conviction: "I love you."

"Fashionable without being absurd, witty without being impertinent, learned without being tedious," a skilful rider and an astonishingly good shot, Bernard de Mons was also a scamp; so that he had all the qualities that should please a woman. But Liane did not love him, although he was lovable, because the proprieties are not conducive to love, and because her hour had not come. This hour struck at the very moment when the Vicomte de Guibray drove up in a buggy drawn by a very fine chestnut horse to the Château de Kildare, where Madame de Gueldre was passing the summer. M. de Guibray could assume, when he chose, a cajoling tone of voice and a caressing glance. But his mind remained narrow and obstinate. He was a very worldly-minded provincial, who had a habit

of giving people their title when he addressed them, calling Madame de Gueldre "Marquise." M. Robert de Bonnières could tell us just what we ought to think of such bad habits. M. de Guibray, in my opinion, had even less pardonable faults.

Self-satisfied, frivolous, insensitive and a hateful egoist, he was far less lovable than Bernard de Mons, who squandered, at each adventure, his time, his money, his health, but not his heart; Bernard, a big child, a prodigal, so well qualified to fall weeping into a pair of compassionate arms. Jean de Guibray was not lovable; he was beloved. What did he do to seduce this fine, proud creature, this exquisite Liane, hitherto slumbering in a facile chastity? He brought to the attempt neither art nor application. He did not even reflect upon the matter. He was merely coarse. Returning from a picnic one night, in a landau, he risked a caress that was an insult. Liane, offended and fascinated, felt that she was his, and that he would take her when he chose, like a motionless prey. Yet she was a courageous, perspicacious little person. She saw him clearly as he was, pitiably frivolous, incapable of loving, ill-natured rather than kind. Her mind was not captive. It was precisely for this reason that she headed for inevitable disaster. She had not even the resource of the internal dialogue, or of effectual soliloquy. She could do nothing to help herself. What could she reply to silent suggestions? What could she oppose to the blind forces that labour in the secret places of our being? "She considered herself with the extreme sincerity that she brought to everything; she found herself profoundly stupid and ridiculous. . . .

"So this man whom she had hardly known the

day before now held the foremost place in her life! And how had he attained this place? . . . Was it by dazzling her with his wit or revealing an exquisite mind? . . . It was simply by doing what he would have done to a wanton."

In short, she loved him. "She wanted to see him; nothing else mattered."

M. de Guibray, for his part, put very little spirit into the adventure, contenting himself with taking, now and again, a few furtive liberties, and, above all, with very little eagerness to come to the point. The difficulties of a liaison alarmed him in advance; and he was occupied, at that very moment, in getting married, and advantageously married. Madame de Gueldre had, indeed, ill-placed the treasure of her love. Can a woman be mistaken to this extent? It is almost a commonplace to wonder at the instinct which guides women in love. Men who are favoured by women, when by chance they have any general ideas, are fond of declaring that women are hardly ever mistaken in their choice. They are obviously thinking of the women who have chosen them. But without invoking the testimony of the old lady who confessed, with a good grace, that she had been jolly well duped in her lifetime, it is credible that women are not always fortunate in their liaisons in a country in which they are run after as much from vanity as from taste. And France is precisely such a country. For that matter, they may choose wrongly in any country, since in all countries man is most commonly volatile, vain and too much of an egoist to consent to love himself only in them. "One never has good luck," says Alexandre Dumas. One may have downright bad luck, but never worse

than Madame de Gueldre had. This pretty creature, all compact of grace, courage and kindliness, received, in return for her whole being, profusely offered, not even so much as a little hypocritical tenderness, or genuine sensuality, or indifferent esteem. For this man did not love her, did not want her and believed her a light woman; he took no pains to conceal his opinion, and she did nothing to undeceive him. "What use?" she thought. "He would not believe me, and perhaps I should please him even less if he knew that there had been nothing in my life." She had seen the *Visite de noces* acted, and she knew that he was something of a snob.

"He had promised her nothing; she had asked nothing of him; she hoped nothing from this strange, uncompleted liaison. Nor did she regret anything. . . . Despite her absolute conviction that Jean did not love her, she felt a crazy desire to be his none the less; a craving to suffer more than she had yet suffered."

Thus Liane lived through some weeks, waiting for infrequent visits or letters that did not come, offering herself in vain, without even feeling humiliated: she had no pride left, having nothing but love, restless, infatuated, burning with fever, scalded with tears. And this was her *passionnette*. She had asked only one favour of M. de Guibray: "Promise me," she had said, "to let me know when you are going to be married." He did not grant her this favour: and it was from the newspapers that she learned of the marriage of M. Marie-François-Jean Vicomte de Guibray to Mademoiselle Lucile-Marie-Caroline de Lancey. From that moment she resolved upon death and concerned herself only with dying like a woman of taste, as naturally as possible.

She had no children, but she owed it to M. de Gueldre to avoid a posthumous scandal. There will be no lack of those who will say: "What! Kill herself for so little: for nothing!" After all, she had not lost M. de Guibray, for he had never been hers. What ties, then, were broken that her whole life should flow forth as from a wound, and that this youthful brow should be dabbled with the sweat of death? It will be said that women who are commonly instinctive and docile by nature, who readily obey the suggestions of the flesh and blood, do not kill themselves for a dream. It is not the usual thing. I myself am in some doubt as to this point, but I am not sufficiently adept to decide. I believe what I am told, especially if it is told well. And I imagine that Gyp might reply: "Why do you want to make out that Liane died of love? She killed herself out of disgust, and because life, after all, had nothing better to offer her. She condemned herself to death because after what she had done and suffered nothing but happiness could have absolved her, and happiness could no longer be hers. In short, she had an infinite need of rest. She was a Bretonne; she was in love with death."

I think Gyp might express herself thus in explanation of this foolish, tragic adventure. After all, Liane was a Bretonne; that is, she had a great heart, simple and prodigal. As she dearly loved God she devised a pious suicide. During the whole period of her *passionnette* she had brought God into her love-affair. At Sainte-Anne d'Auray she had made a novena in order that M. de Guibray should love her. In Paris, during the desolate days of a separation unsoftened by memories, she went every morning to Saint-Roch to burn a candle. It was

pleasing to God, she thought, "this pretty white column, elegant as a lily-stem, which consumed itself in silence, uplifting its bright flame to heaven." On the morning of the day which she had chosen for her death she had all the candles lit that the candelabrum of the chapel would contain upon its pointed spikes. For a moment she watched them burning, then returned home, put on her most beautiful gown, and, having swallowed a phial of morphia, she lay down on her bed and, full of hope in God, fell upon her last sleep. This was not perhaps very logical. A theologian would quickly perceive that Liane reasoned incorrectly. But she was not a theologian, and she had no conception of a wholly inflexible God. It has been noted from the remotest ages that the gods of women are not in the least of a dogmatic nature and that they have an inexhaustible indulgence for the weaknesses of the heart and the senses. And while Liane was lying all white upon her bed, the pale, chaste flame fed by the wax of bees ascended, in the church, toward the God who owed this woman the share of love and happiness that she had not enjoyed on earth.

There is the story of Liane. I have spoiled it in the telling. It would have been better not to touch it, better not to mar its charming simplicity. I have proved once again that the scholiasts ought not to scribble on the margin of love-stories. But the scholiasts are incorrigible; they must bescribble the most touching histories with their prose. If only I could have given you some idea of the charm of *Passionnette!* We know that Gyp is the pseudonym of a great-grand-niece of the great Mirabeau, Madame la Comtesse de Martel-Janville, who has accustomed us to dialogues whose irony is light and

sure, in which the life of the world of fashion depicts itself in all its brilliant frivolity. I have lately been pondering, as a moralist, over some of these dainty masterpieces of wit, refinement and gaiety. *Passionnette* reveals a novel aspect of this writer's talents, and we know now that Gyp is a true story-teller, a delicate artist, with the power of moving her readers. Moreover, there passes through this book a breath of generosity and courage; it is imbued with a profound and restrained sensibility; we are conscious, on reading it, of a good faith and a sincerity which, strangely allied with the most feminine unconsciousness, inspire a very rare quality of admiration and sympathy.

J.-J. WEISS

IS destiny was as diverse as his soul. The contradictions of his intellect obstructed his fortune. Endowed with a purely speculative mind, he cherished the ambitions of a statesman. He believed himself to be made for business, and what tempted him was in truth the romance of business. If he had written his memoirs, French literature would possess one great masterpiece the more, and we should marvel to see in our democracy a Retz of the university, a plebeian Saint-Simon.

Jean-Jacques Weiss was born at Bayonne, in the barracks, under the folds of the white flag which three years later was to make way for the tricolour. When he was in his cradle his mother dreamed of his winning a captain's gorget. His father, a salaried musician in a regiment of the line, had him entered "on the strength" as a child of the regiment, and until the age of twelve he journeyed from garrison to garrison, leading a healthy, picturesque life. Fifty years later, conscious of the presentiment of approaching death, and, recalling his childhood, he painted the freshest and most lively picture of it:

I have always in mind my little room in the great barracks at Givet, between the rugged rock of Charlemont and the Meuse, with its fierce current; Fort Saint-Jean, where the roaring of the waves lulled me to sleep at night; Vincennes, whose keep, in the rays of a full moon, in June, filled me with the melancholy of the centuries. One fine day the colonel would send a sapper to the

barracks with a sealed note for the adjutant-major on service. "Now to pack our bags," he used to say, "in ten days we leave." Each year found me in a fresh corner of France and gave me a new impression of this manifold country, far more various in its artificial unity than Germany with her thirty-six States. We were in the Jura mountains; *en route* for the Durance and the fountain of Vaucluse! My longing to see, to gaze about me, was insatiable. At half-past three in the morning the drum would beat in the streets for the regiment's departure; the column of march would form up in the principal square of the town; I took my place in the rear-guard; when my legs gave way, which was not often, I hoisted myself up among the baggage, on the waggon hired as far as the next stage by the battalion; and before my eyes passed France, mountains and valleys, brooks and rivers, gloomy crenellated castles of the days of old and smiling villas built yesterday."

Victor Hugo was also a regimental ward in his childhood, and was able to say:

> Moi qui fus un soldat quand j'étais un enfant.*

Entered by his father, then colonel, on the rolls of the Royal Corsica regiment, created in 1806 in the kingdom of Naples to assist Joseph to oppose the partisans of Apulia and the Calabrias, he covered, with his little legs, at the military quick-step, the roads of Italy, Spain and France, and saw an infinite series of landscapes which were to remain impressed upon his eyes, the most powerful in the world.

> Avec nos camps vainqueurs, dans l'Europe asservie
> J'errai, je parcourus la terre avant la vie.†

Such were the first springs at which the genius of Victor Hugo drank. Weiss also profited to the full

* I who was a soldier when I was a child.

† With our victorious encampments, in subjugated Europe—I wandered, I went about the world before I lived.

by these magnificent journeys from one end of France to the other, when his mother-country, a kindly parent, reared him on black bread and pure air. He acquired a broad feeling for Nature, a taste for life and humanity, an understanding and a love for his native land. For gifted children there is no school like that of the open air. For the bushes by the roadside, the smoke of distant chimneys, the fields, the cities, and the skies, smiling or gloomy, reveal to the growing, unfolding soul secrets a thousand times more precious than those that are explained in the books. The open air school becomes in all respects excellent when military discipline tempers its caprices.

It must not be supposed that Weiss, at the age of eleven, had read only the lessons of the trees and the clouds in the sky. There were, in the waggon, beside the instruments of the hired musician, some tattered volumes which were the child's delight. They were Florian's fables, with the two idylls of *Ruth* and *Tobias, Télemaque, Robinson Crusoe,* Rollin's histories, and the *Odyssey,* so amusing and easy to read in the old translations. As we see, the selection was a good one, and the regimental ward found in this little campaigning library all the artless romance and the ornate argument that he was fitted to understand.

And from time to time, in the garrison towns, he went to the theatre and saw some extremely gloomy tragedy performed, or a pleasant vaudeville of Madame's repertory. So that, having entered college at Dijon at the age of twelve, he ran through two classes in ten months and became, immediately, an excellent humanist.

While he was studying Homer and Virgil, he

learned to dance. This detail is in itself of little importance, and I have never heard any of those who knew Weiss say that he made his way in the world by his skill in leading the cotillon. He himself admitted with a good grace that he derived very little profit from his dancing lessons, and was by no means a Bassompierre. Perhaps he regretted this a little at the bottom of his heart, for, although he was utterly careless as regards his clothes, he was a judge of fashionable elegance, having frequented the Courts with Madame de Motteville, Saint-Simon, Madame de Caylus and Madame de Staal. However this may be, I should not have mentioned his dancing-master if he had not immortalized him on a page which is not to be found in any of his books, but which is a masterpiece of wit, feeling and style. It was in the year 1839 that young Weiss took lessons in dancing and deportment from an old inhabitant of Dijon, Mercier by name, if ever there was one, a professor of the true classic school. For the rest, the reader will thank me for quoting the literal text:

Mercier himself used to play, on the violin, the measures which he made us dance. Threading the Rue Condé, which is the central artery of Dijon, you turned to the left, coming from the Place d'Armes, into a gloomy little street; you went through a shop, descended three steps, and there was the place. There, in a large back room, lit in broad daylight by smoky lamps, was enthroned Father Mercier, professor of the violin, of dancing and deportment, and of salutation in the French manner; famous in Dijon in his own person and through his son, a great violinist who would have acquired a European reputation if he had consented to exchange life in his native town, his love for which was as great as its lovableness, for life in Paris, which he did not like. Père Mercier's figure breathed the stern serenity of a worthy man who has lived fifty years beneath the eyes of his fellow-citizens, knowing that none of them could reproach him for a

single violation of the correct principles of the dance, or the violin, or anything else. In the matter of dancing, above all, his principles were terrific. Here at least was a man who could boast that he did not regard dancing as an amusement! I had already read in books that this art was an enervating one. The thoughtless writers who gave such definitions had never fagged away at the five positions, the stamps of the foot and the bends of the knee under Père Mercier, in the month of July, when it was ninety in the shade.

One day when he was keeping me in the fifth position—with the two feet crossed so that the toe of one foot and the heel of the other touch—I venture to say that I could not quite understand the use of this position, very unusual in real life and extremely uncomfortable, and I made so bold as to ask him when he would finally teach me to waltz? If you could have seen his surprise! He all but choked. First of all he laid down his spectacles, then his violin; he gazed at me severely, in silence; when he considered that I was sufficiently covered with confusion he made me this ferocious speech: "Young man, respect my age. I do not teach jigs for the tavern. Your honoured father can remove you from my class when he pleases. As long as you remain by his will you will be good enough to observe my two principles. *Primo,* the great maxim in any art whatsoever is never to mitigate the difficulties of the matter for the beginner. *Secundo,* what does M. Maître-jean teach you at the Royal College? Languages which you will never speak. Well, here, then, you will learn only steps that are no longer danced, the minuet, the gavotte, the anglaise, etc." And bridling, he added: "I am a professor of dead dances!" I resumed the fifth position to the best of my ability.

And, recalling Père Mercier's cellar toward the close of his life, Weiss declared that the professor of dead dances was correct in his teaching, and that his pupil was grateful for his strenuous lessons. "It is obvious," he used to say, "that he did not succeed in endowing me with the elegance of an Alcibiades. However, I am inclined to think that I did not waste my time over the five positions. I owe to Père Mercier the desire and the feeling for agility of style." In the days of Père Mercier, Weiss, at Dijon,

divided his admiration between Homer, Theocritus, Virgil and Paul de Kock, whom he read with a light and innocent mind. These motley diversities of taste and feeling are common in youth. But they were so natural to Weiss that he remained something of a harlequin to the end. The *Laitière de Montfermeil* always reminded him of the *Syracusan Women* of Theocritus. And he was already an old man when he wrote: "I cannot utter the name of Paul de Kock without evoking a swarm of Nausicaas at the washing-board and Galateas fleeing on donkey-back to the willows!"

Such comparisons may shock a frigid æsthete. But it would perhaps be wiser to appreciate them as the pranks of an amiable wit and the whims of a wonderfully agile mind. Weiss completed his studies in Paris, at the college of Louis-le-Grand. To tell the truth, he frequented the theatres as assiduously as his classes. We have his own evidence on this point: "I was educated half at Louis-le-Grand, half at the Feydeau and the Odéon." When he could manage nothing better, there was the Petit-Lazari, where the *parterre* cost five sous. For this reason and many others he won the honours prize for philosophy. After this he entered the École Normale and was a member of the turbulent class of 1847. Paris, with its theatres, its clubs, its pavements torn up by the rioters, its reading-rooms and its political and literary cafés; with the walks in the garden of the Luxembourg, under the plane-trees, the youthful conversations before the Velléda of the Pépinière, the protracted hopes, the great ambitions, the enthusiasm and the noise of the city: all this he had to leave for the silence of the provinces, for the narrow, monotonous life of the

teacher. J.-J. Weiss was sent to the *lycée* of La Rochelle, where he taught history.

To the tedium of his profession was added the mortifications with which the University, crushed by the law of the 15th March, 1850, and the decree of the 19th March, 1852, was overwhelmed by a jealous, harsh and malignant administration. We know that the Fortoul Ministry has left a painful recollection in the memory of old University men. In 1855 the Inspecteur d'Académie having addressed to the professors of the *lycée* of La Rochelle a circular letter worded in a manner which gave them offence, Weiss replied in the name of his colleagues by a letter which resulted in the writer's immediate discharge. But he was only a little while out of favour, and the incident had a happy termination. The following year Weiss succeeded Prévost-Paradol as professor of French literature in the faculty of Aix. There he spent a year, perhaps the most delightful year of his whole life. He always retained an enchanted memory of it.

The city of Aix, in 1857, was no more than a mausoleum of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With its lapidary contexture the mausoleum had quite a majestic appearance; beneath the eternal sunlight and the unchanging blue sky that bathed them, the buildings, the palaces and *hôtels* of the great seigneurs of the last century, the promenades and the fountains, all bore magnificent witness to the elegance, the sobriety, the simplicity and the grace which were essential qualities of the time when the city, which now one saw only in its moribund state, and a little decayed, was radiant with newness and life. . . . About the year 1855, in this remote, isolated corner of the land of France, there still throbbed, at the back of men's minds, a remnant of the pure classic France. I should find it very difficult to-day to define precisely what I mean by classic. At the faculty of Aix, in that peculiar climate, so dry and limpid, I found no difficulty in feeling

it. A course of the faculty, a course in eloquence and poetry . . . is only possible, can only escape the tedium of empty triviality, can only have substance and value, if it is the common achievement of the master and his audience. . . .

My audience in Aix-en-Provence made me forever a classic. It consisted of some two hundred persons of all ages, from sixteen to sixty, most of them belonging to the middle ranks of society, with a substratum of students . . . counsel at the Court, and magistrates of all ranks, intendants and administrative officials . . . and a certain number of women. . . . All these constituted an attentive and formidable audience, whose mental diet was rich and solid, and whose taste emerged in sudden flashes, quick and refined. On Thursdays, about four o'clock in the afternoon, I crossed the Cours, the main artery of the city, to repair to the retired and silent corner where the lecture-hall of the faculty was situated. The sun was still blazing; his rays were expiring, but violently, and I used sometimes to ask myself whether the excessive heat would not have kept part of my public at home. But they were all there, very faithful auditors, so well adapted to hear the things that I was about to tell them, so well equipped to make me adapt myself to them, by all the intelligent curiosity that escaped from their countenances! Above our heads, between them and me, floated a Muse, invisible and transparent under its etherial atmosphere, scattering the poetic fire that illumines men's souls and transports them to or maintains them at the level of the poets, lofty and profound or light and unconstrained, which brings us all into harmony with their majestic words, or their diversions and their smiles; which makes us re-create their noble works as we read, feel and explain them. This state of mind then appeared free and disciplined at the same time, and coherent, and yet, in an assembly of two hundred persons of all conditions and ages, it is not common. I did not flatter myself that I had aroused it. It was the product of a more general spirit, created and sustained by the education which the University had for forty years been giving the children of the well-to-do or cultivated classes of the nation, to the children of all those who were seeking to uplift themselves toward ease or culture by continual labour and desperate thrift.

This course of lectures, in which Weiss dealt with the comedy of France, had a great success. I cannot imagine what the delivery of the youthful professor

was like, for it was impossible to find any trace of it in the dejected conversation, clouded, yet still brilliant, of the old man whom I had the honour of hearing, on two or three occasions, in private life. We can at least form some idea of the solid and brilliant originality of his ideas from the remnants of this course, which have been collected in the volume entitled *Essai sur l'histoire de la littérature française.* In this Weiss reveals himself as infinitely ingenious; full of variety and of novel ideas, abounding in profound and acute opinions. The following year he went to Dijon as a professor of the faculty of that city; there he abandoned teaching. It was his destiny to be pyrotechnical. M. Bertin having offered him the editorship of the political bulletin of *Les Débats,* Weiss accepted it, and the professor became a journalist. Thenceforth I am no longer concerned with his career; or, to be exact, I am concerned with it only during the intervals in which he suddenly emerges from politics to resume the profession of letters, which half-consoled him for the mortifications and the disappointments of public life.

I will only remind the reader—so that I may not altogether break the sequence of events—that, having founded the *Journal de Paris,* with M. Hervé, in December, 1868, he was condemned by the Sixth Chamber for conspiracy, in respect of the Baudin subscription, of which he was one of the promoters. He conducted his own defence, and in a sober and powerful speech he reminded the court that Cremutius Cordus was accused of *lèse-majesté,* at the order of Tiberius, for having written an apology for Brutus and Cassius. This appeared to be a fortunate move; and indeed it was. Those were the

days when Rogeard was writing the *Propos de Labienus;* the days of the last of the French humanists. A gulf divides our generation from theirs. A year later, by one of those sudden activities more frequent under absolute governments than under a republic, the man condemned by the Sixth Chamber rallied to the Empire, entered political life with the Ollivier cabinet and was appointed secretary-general to the Ministry of the Fine Arts, and then Councillor of State in a non-departmental capacity. Six months later the Empire collapsed, carrying with it, amid incalculable ruin, the political fortunes of J.-J. Weiss. Despite his intellect he had no sense of the opportune. His great mistake was to believe that he was fitted for public affairs because he was an interested and penetrating student of history. The historian's mind is divergent and largely irradiative. The politician's mind, on the other hand, is convergent, focussing its rays upon a given point. Now, no one ever had a more divergent mind than Weiss. After the war of 1870 he was, within himself and by himself, as divided in respect of a monarchical restoration as was the majority of the National Assembly. This, no doubt, is why the Assembly reappointed him, in 1873, to the Council of State, from which he was almost immediately excluded. In November, 1881, when he formed his Ministry, Gambetta appointed Weiss political director and keeper of the archives in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But on the fall of the great ministry he had to send in his resignation Once more, it is not for me to form an estimate of Weiss the politician. I need not even say that through all his shifting fortunes he always remained absolutely honest; no one has ever doubted it.

Abandoned by his ambitions and illusions, at the age of fifty-five he returned to the literary side of journalism, and by his talents he greatly honoured our profession. He loved letters; they were, he said, "the innocent converse of the hours, the delight and the nobility of life." And letters, at least, did not betray his love. At fifty-five they restored him to youth and energy. His dramatic criticisms in *Les Débats* are wonderful work, full of charm and judgment.

Like Taine, Weiss conceived literary criticism as one of the forms of history. He understood that the chief purpose of a work of art, poem, novel or comedy is to make us understand, feel and relish life; life, and the particular flavour which it possessed at the time when the work was conceived and in the society of which it is the subtlest expression; in short, that there is no more precious monument of the manners of other times, no more certain testimony of bygone states of the mind, than this or that song or story, provided they are properly understood. This was the path by which Taine advanced with a slow and certain method; and on it Weiss invariably frolicked along in a crazy but always successful fashion. He had a nomadic spirit, and he liked to run at a venture. At a venture he many times discovered the transformations of the French people in the various literary types which this people has created. I confess that his criticism pleases me more, and principally, by its enthusiasm and its passion. Weiss adored that Gallic spirit of which he had, unknown to himself, more than his share. And his wide acquaintance with German literature enabled him better to judge how rare this spirit is, how original and unique. He loved its

exactitude. He used to say, most truly: "Accuracy is in itself a kind of genius." And in the Gallic spirit he loved and valued the talent for analysis, the art of decomposing sensations and ideas, the profound knowledge of the human heart, the nice understanding of life and the interplay of the passions. He loved the Gallic spirit for its good breeding, its irreproachable manners, its easy grace. He adored the Gallic genius, even in the minor poets of the eighteenth century. "It is only a trickle of water," he would say, "but how limpid! It is a spring that you could catch in the hollow of your hand, but how fresh it is!" He was, no doubt, immoderate in his admiration. He was like a shepherd of Arcady, who, intoxicated with the blossom of laburnum and elder, forgets to number his flock.

What matter! Taste always profited by his faults of taste. Well might he take pleasure, here and there, in some work that was in reality a little colourless, a little meagre, but which he nourished and coloured miraculously in his imagination!

He had such a picturesque soul! Why did he not write his memoirs? . . . I must say so again, for I bitterly regret his failure to do so. Yet, after all, he has written them, by fragments and at random, in the thousand articles scattered through the Press which ought one day to be collected.

MADAME DE LA FAYETTE*

OME three years ago we had occasion to mention the *Princesse de Clèves*.† The reader will permit us to speak once more of Madame de la Fayette. Here is a pleasant subject, and the opportunity is a good one. M. le Comte d'Haussonville, in short, has just published, in the *Collection des grands écrivains*, a graceful and judicious study of Madame de la Fayette, and, by a rare stroke of fortune, he has discovered some unknown sources which, skilfully utilized, give his work the interest of novelty. These sources are: (1) letters from Madame de la Fayette to Ménage, which, already mentioned by Victor Cousin in his introduction to *La Jeunesse de Madame de Longueville*, are at present in the hands of the heirs of M. Feuillet de Conches. We know that documents from the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches should not be accepted without scrutiny. But these letters of Madame de la Fayette's, which come from the Tarbé sale, are of undoubted authenticity. (2) The papers of the Abbé de la Fayette, Madame de la Fayette's eldest son, which are now preserved in the collection of the Duc de la Trémoïlle. These are

* *Les grands écrivains: Madame de la Fayette,* by the Comte d'Haussonville, 1 vol. in 18. Hachette.

† In the preface of Conquet's edition.

inventories, contracts, business documents. M. d'Haussonville has examined them with an interest not unmixed with a kind of emotion that all those will understand who have amused themselves by evoking the figures of the past from the dust of archives.

"Their dryness," he says, "and their aridity even give, as a matter of fact, a peculiar life to the persons whom they concern, by revealing them to us involved like ourselves, in the commonplace incidents of life. . . . No one, I believe, had handled them before I did, for on more than one page the pounce was still adhering to the ink. It was not without regret that I shook it off, adding yet another act of destruction to all those that are the work of life."

Delightful veneration for the past. M. d'Haussonville also made in M. de la Trémoïlle's collection some highly interesting and entirely unexpected discoveries concerning Madame de la Fayette's domestic life. We know that Marie-Madeleine de la Vergne married, in 1655, at the age of twenty-three, Jean-François Motier de la Fayette, who was descended from a very ancient family of Auvergne. We had some reason for believing that this gentleman was not very greatly beloved, and that he was not particularly lovable. If we are to credit a song of the period, at his first interview with Mademoiselle de la Vergne he never breathed a word, but was none the less approved.

La belle consultée
Sur son futur époux,
Dit dans cette assemblée
Qu'il paraissait si doux

Et d'un air fort honnête
Quoique peut-être bête.
Mais qu'après tout, pour elle, un tel mari
Etait un bon parti.*

Mademoiselle de la Vergne, with a great deal of wit and all the Latin that Ménage had taught her, was not easily settled in life. Her property was small. She had lost her father. Her mother, a very hare-brained person and something of an intriguer, had not the best of reputations. She had not been able to protect her daughter from slander. Moreover, she was about to re-marry. Marie-Madeleine, who was reasonable, made a sensible marriage, and departed quietly for Auvergne.

In a letter dating from the early years of her marriage she tells her master, Gilles Ménage, of the sort of life that she leads in the provinces and the peaceful content which she enjoys there. This letter is published for the first time by M. d'Haussonville. It must be quoted in its entirety:

Since I wrote to you I have constantly been away from home paying visits. One of these was to M. de Bayard, and when I tell you of the rest you will be no wiser. They were to people whom you are so happy as not to know, and whom I have the misfortune to have for neighbours. However, I must confess, to the shame of my fastidiousness, that I am not wearied by these people, though I scarcely find them amusing; but I have acquired a certain way of speaking to them of things familiar to them, which prevents me from finding them tedious. It is also true that we have men in this neighbourhood who are by no means lacking in wit for provincial folk. The women are not nearly so intelligent, but then they scarcely ever go visiting; consequently one is not much troubled by them. For my part, I would much

* The fair one, consulted—as to her future husband—said, in this assembly,—that he appeared so gentle—and had the look of a very good man—although perhaps a stupid one.—But after all, for her such a husband—was a good match.

rather see next to nobody than see tiresome people, and the solitude which I find here is agreeable to me rather than wearisome. The care that I take of my house gives me a great deal of occupation and amusement; and as, moreover, I have no troubles, as my husband adores me, and as I love him dearly, and am absolute mistress here, I assure you that the life I lead is a very happy one, and I only pray to God that it may continue. When we believe that we are happy that, as you know, is enough to make us happy; and as I am persuaded that I am so I live a life of greater content, perhaps, than all the queens of Europe.

The young woman makes it pretty clear that the pallid happiness which she enjoys is purely the result of reason. She congratulates herself upon it as her own creation. We plainly perceive that the husband who "adores" her has nothing to do with it, and that if she "loves him dearly" it is with resignation and because she is a perfectly reasonable being. M. de la Fayette lived on his estates of Naddes and Espinasse. "He appears to have been somewhat litigious," says M. d'Haussonville, "to judge by the rather numerous disputes which he had with his neighbours."

After some years of marriage we find Madame de la Fayette at Madame's Court, in that small *hôtel* in the Rue de Vaugirard, facing the Petit-Luxembourg, where there was a garden with a fountain and a small closed summer-house. "It was," says Madame de Sévigné, "in Paris, the prettiest place in the world to rest in." M. de la Rochefoucauld used to go there every day.

Of M. de la Fayette we learn nothing further, Madame de Sévigné does not mention him. All the biographers have concluded from this that he was dead, and it was the unanimous opinion that Madame de la Fayette had become a widow after a few years of married life. Nothing of the sort!

M. de la Fayette was alive and living on his estate. He survived M. de la Rochefoucauld, who died in 1680, by three years. M. d'Haussonville (and which of us will not envy him his good fortune?) found in the archives of the Comte de la Trémoïlle a document proving that François Motier, Comte de la Fayette, died on the 26th June, 1683. Madame de la Fayette had in reality twenty-eight years of married life, and she was not a widow when she suffered the assiduous attentions of the duke. Madame de Sévigné was not in the least scandalized. M. d'Haussonville is inclined to be more severe. He does not conceal the fact that he would find Madame de la Fayette less pleasing if she had betrayed the fidelity which she formerly promised the worthy gentleman who hunted the forests of Auvergne while she wrote novels in Paris in the little closed summer-house. He would like her to be absolutely chaste. Fortunately he is certain that her connection with M. de la Rochefoucauld was innocent. She loved the duke; she was loved in return; but she resisted him. So, at least, he will have it; but, after all, he knows nothing about it. I know no more; but if I were to contradict him I should have probability on my side. However, politeness would remain on his, which would be a great disadvantage for me. So I wish all that he wishes. But I confess that, in order to do so, I have to bring a great deal of constraint to bear upon my judgment. Madame de la Fayette was twenty-five years of age and the duke forty-six. One asks oneself how, his temperament being what it was, she could have kept him without giving herself to him. He lived only for her, and beside her. He never left her. Whether one likes it or not, this

gives one matter for thought. M. d'Haussonville himself does not believe in the voluntary continence of M. de la Rochefoucauld, and I, despite myself, doubt Madame de la Fayette's piety. To him the soul of this charming woman seems transparent. I have sought to understand her in vain; for me it remains completely obscure.

To my thinking this "sincere" person was impenetrable. A prude, devout, in favour at Court, I could almost suspect that she disbelieved in virtue, had little faith in God, and, which is more astonishing considering the period, that she hated the King. Her most intimate friends knew nothing about her. They thought her indolent. She herself used to say that she was "steeped in idleness," and she managed her affairs with indefatigable zeal. I do not reproach her for this; but I do believe that no woman was ever more secretive.

M. d'Haussonville's book is valuable for its biography of Madame de la Fayette. But this is not its only merit. We find in it a judicious examination of this illustrious lady's works. M. d'Haussonville estimates the dainty story of Henriette at its true value. He has only a half-liking for *Zaïde,* a Spanish tale in which we meet with kidnappings, pirates, and frightful solitudes, and in which the complete lovers sigh in palaces adorned with allegorical paintings. He very justly reserves the better part of his admiration for *La Princesse de Clèves.*

With *La Princesse de Clèves,* which appeared in 1678, Madame de la Fayette harmoniously added her voice to the choir of the classic authors, following Molière and La Fontaine, Boileau and Racine.

But we must be careful to note that while *La Princesse de Clèves* attests, by the natural grace

of its style and thought, the advent of Racine, Madame de la Fayette belongs, none the less, by the very spirit of her work, to the generation of the Fronde, to the youth reared upon Corneille. She remains heroic in her simplicity and retains a magnificent ideal of life. In the very depths of her nature her heroine is, like Émilie, an "adorable fury," a modest fury, no doubt; but I spy a few serpents' heads amid her golden tresses.

Madame de Clèves, the most beautiful woman at Court, is beloved by M. de Nemours, the most shapely man in the whole kingdom. M. de Nemours, who has hitherto displayed a fortunate audacity in his numerous affairs of the heart, becomes timid as soon as he really falls in love. He conceals his passion, but Madame de Clèves divines it, and, quite involuntarily, returns it. To fortify herself against the peril into which her heart is leading her, she does not fear to confess to her husband that she loves M. de Nemours, that she fears him and fears herself. At first her husband reassures her. But as a result of an imprudence and an indiscretion on the part of the Duc de Nemours he believes himself betrayed and dies of mortification.

The most original thing in the conduct of Madame de Clèves is undoubtedly the confession to her husband of a love that is not for him. Her virtue is thereby demonstrated, but, considering the mere humanity of the action, she has not, we must admit, any great reason to congratulate herself. This confession is the prime cause of M. de Clèves' death. If she had not spoken M. de Clèves would not have died; he would have lived in peace, happy in a tender illusion. But she had to be sin-

cere at any cost. This was also the opinion of a celebrated lady who a hundred years later reproduced this scene of the confession. Madame Roland at the age of forty felt what she called, like a daughter of Rousseau and a child of Nature, "the keen affections of a powerful mind controlling a robust body." The man she loved had, like herself, an exalted sense of duty. He was the deputy Buzot. They loved without surrender. Madame Roland had a husband twenty years her senior, a good man, but on the verge of physical senility. She thought it her duty, like Madame de Clèves, to confess to this worthy man that she loved another. The confession, made to a husband so decrepit, could not lead to tragedy, and in this respect Madame Roland will perhaps be thought less imprudent than Madame de Clèves. However, the result was lamentable. "My husband," she says in her *Mémoires,* "excessively sensible both of affection and of self-esteem, could not endure the idea of the slightest elimination of his supremacy. His imagination became gloomy; his jealousy irritated me; happiness fled far from us. He adored me, I sacrificed myself to him, and we were miserable."

Madame de Clèves, as far as I know, has had no other imitator of her cruel sincerity than Madame Roland. And we must reflect that Madame Roland had not such good reasons for acting as Madame de Clèves did. She begged for assistance; Madame Roland wished merely to display her passion and her virtue. As a motive that was less to be admired.

CHARLES LE GOFFIC*

A BRETON POET

CHARLES LE GOFFIC has not yet completed his twenty-eighth year, yet in his origins he comes into contact with the past; he was born a contemporary of bygone centuries, for he saw the light and was reared in the little town of Lannion, which twenty-five years ago was still a city of the Middle Ages. He spent long hours upon the quays, watching the lazy waters of the Leguer softly caressing the black hulls of the luggers and cutters. He played his first games in the hilly streets, in the shadow of the ancient houses whose carved beams are painted red, and whose walls are covered with slates as with a dark blue coat of mail. He ran over the high-pitched, buttressed bridge which, near the windmill, formerly gave access to the Plouaret road. Of Italian blood on his mother's side, the child was of the old Breton on his father's, Jean-François Goffic. Le Goffic, in the Celtic, means "little blacksmith." Jean-François le Goffic was the Lannion bookseller, but he was a rare and special sort of bookseller; he was the publisher of the bards. In this country, where, says François-Marie Luzel, "the bard sings on the threshold of his door," where, as Emile Souvestre tells us, "verses echo

* *Amour breton*, 1 vol. in 8vo.

from rock to rock, where verses hover in the air like insects of an evening, where the wind whips your face in gusts, with the odour of buckwheat and thyme," Jean-François le Goffic printed, in "mail-headed" type, the heroic *gwerz* and graceful *sônes*, and he must have had plenty to do, being the authorized publisher of the disciples of Taliesin and Hyvarnion, the modern Kloers and all the confraternity of the good Saint Hervé. M. Charles Maurras tells us that laymen and clergy, mendicants and men of letters, all the *jouglars* of the country, met once a year in the house of Jean-François, at a banquet, where they sang all night on twenty broached cider-casks.

Conceived amid these festivals of popular poetry, Charles le Goffic was born a poet. Later on he studied, was educated at Rennes, and became "un monsieur." Good Breton that he was, he fought a duel at the age of eighteen. Destined for a professorship, he went to Paris to complete his studies. There, on the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, he recalled the festivals in his father's house and the women of Lannion. Under their white coifs, in their black dresses, the women of Lannion are of an exquisite beauty. Their pale colouring, their austere bearing, and the head-band that half covers their hair, give them a nun-like look; but these brown women with blue eyes have a mysterious smile upon their lips to which one loses one's heart. On completing his studies, Charles le Goffic wrote verses, and they told of love, and this love was Breton. It was wholly Breton, for she who inspired it had grown to womanhood in Brittany, and he who felt it imbued it with a certain vagueness and the love of death. The poet tells us that his beloved, a

peasant like Marie de Brizeaux, was seventeen years old, and her name was Anne-Marie.

Elle est née au pays de lande,
A Lomikel, où débarqua,
Dans une belle auge en mica
Monsieur saint Efflam, roi d'Irlande.*

It was, in fact, the custom of the old Irish saints to land on the Armorican coast in a watering-trough, and Charles le Goffic must have known in all its particulars the story of Saint Efflam and his wife Enora, having seen it played, as a mystery, in his childhood, at Lannion, on St. Michael's day.

Elle est sous l'invocation
De madame Marie et d'Anne,
Lis de candeur, urnes de manne,
Double vaisseau d'élection.

Elle aura dix-huit ans le jour
Le jour de la fête votive
Du bienheureux monsieur saint Yve,
Patron des juges sans détour.†

Now, the festival of Saint Yves Hélouri falls on the 19th of May. And the poet elsewhere tells us

* She was born in the moorland country,
At Lomikel, where landed,
In a beautiful trough of glistening stone,
Monsieur Saint Efflam, king of Ireland.

† She is under the protection
Of the Ladies Marie and Anne,
Lilies of purity, urns of manna,
A twofold vessel of election.

She will be eighteen years old
On the day of the votive festival
Of the blessed lord Saint Yves,
The patron of upright judges.

that Anne-Marie was born on "a lovely Sunday in the spring," and that, according to custom, Saint Anne and the Virgin in person, stood one beside the bed of the mother, and one beside the cradle of the child.

In telling us of his love the poet does not enter into details. He informs us only that he met his country-woman in Paris, still shy, artlessly pretty, having retained her rustic grace and her slow voice; but, one guesses, strayed and fallen.

Hélas! tu n'es plus une paysanne:
Le mal des cités a pâli ton front,
Mais tu peux aller de Parinpol à Vanne,
Les gens du pays te reconnaîtrent.

Car ton corps n'a point de grâces serviles,
Tu n'as pas changé ton pas nonchalant,
Et ta voix rebelle au parler des villes
A gardé son timbre augural et lent.

Et je ne sais quoi dans ton amour même,
Un geste fuyant, des regards gênés,
Évoque en mon cœur le pays que j'aime,
Le pays très chaste où nous sommes nés.*

---

* Alas, you are no longer a peasant-girl:
The evil of the cities has paled your face,
But you can go from Parinpol to Vanne,
And the country-folk will recognize you.

For your body has no servile graces,
You have not lost your careless gait,
And your voice, rebellious to the speech of the cities,
Has retained its slow, augural accent.

And I know not what, even in your love,
A fugitive gesture, an uneasy glance,
Evokes in my heart the country that I love,
The pure, austere country where we were born.

What became of Anne-Marie in Paris? We do not know, and we cannot help feeling uneasy. We cannot avoid a vague vision of the fiery sails of the Moulin-Rouge turning, in the dusk of evening, over the head of the young Breton girl, while the dreamy student devises triolets for her, verses full of an infinite tenderness:

Puisque je sais que vous m'aimez,
Je n'ai pas besoin d'autre chose.
Mes maux seront bientôt calmés,
Puisque je sais que vous m'aimez
Et que j'aurai les yeux fermés
Par vos doigts de lis et de rose.
Puisque je sais que vous m'aimez,
Je n'ai pas besoin d'autre chose.

Je voudrais mourir à présent,
Pour vous avoir près de ma couche,
Allant, venant, riant, causant,
Je voudrais mourir à présent
Pour sentir en agonisant
Le souffle exquis de votre bouche.
Je voudrais mourir à présent
Pour vous avoir près de ma couche.

. . . . .

Jasmins d'Aden, œillets d'Hydra,
Ou roses blanches de l'Écosse,
Fleurs d'eglantier, fleur de cédrat,
Jasmins d'Aden, œillets d'Hydra,
Dites-moi les fleurs qu'il faudra,
Les fleurs qu'il faut pour notre noce,
Jasmins d'Aden, œillets d'Hydra,
Ou roses blanches de l'Écosse.

Sur les lacs et dans forêts
Pieds nus, la nuits, coûte que coûte,
J'irai les cueillir tout exprès,
Sur les lacs et dans les forêts.

Hélas! et peut-être j'aurais
Le bonheur de mourir en route.
Sur les lacs et dans les forêts,
Pieds nus, la nuit, coûte que coûte.*

In these verses the poet certainly seems to believe that if love is good, death is better. He is sincere,

* Since I know that you love me,
I have no need of aught besides.
My woes will soon be assuaged,
Since I know that you love me
And that I shall have my eyes closed
By your fingers of lily and rose.
Since I know that you love me
I have no need of aught besides.

I would fain die now,
To have you beside my bed,
Coming and going, smiling, talking.
I would fain die now,
To feel in dying
The exquisite breath of your mouth.
I would fain die now
To have you beside my bed.

. . . .

Arabian jasmin, clustered pinks,
Or white roses of Scotland,
Briar roses, cedra blossoms,
Arabian jasmin, clustered pinks,
Tell me the flowers we shall need,
The flowers we need for our nuptials,
Arabian jasmin, clustered pinks,
Or white roses of Scotland.

Beside the lakes and in the forest,
Barefooted, by night, cost what it may,
I shall go to gather them specially,
Beside the lakes and in the forest.
Alas! and perhaps I might have
The happiness to die on the way.
Beside the lakes and in the forest,
Barefooted, by night, cost what it may.

but he changes his mind almost immediately, to tell us lightly, with Jean-Paul, that "love, like the quails, comes and goes in the hot weather." For the rest, I shall not attempt to discover the order and sequence of the short, detached poems that make up *Amour breton,* nor to re-establish the connecting links which the poet has deliberately broken. It is with intention that he has mingled irony with tenderness, brutality with idealism. He wishes one to divine the high-spirited youth in the dreamer, and the drinker in the lover. Breton love reminds us of the banquets that Jean-François le Goffic used to give the Breton bards: they invited Vivien and Merlin, the enchanters and the fairies, to be of their company, but they broached the cider-casks. *Amour breton* embarrassed these commentators who, like Jules Tellier, were intimate with the poet. One of them, having questioned M. Quellien, who is a bard, received this precious reply: "We Bretons like a book to have a soul in it. As for having a heart, we can do without that." Yet there is a heart also in *Amour breton.* One is conscious of a real grief, real troubles and real tears in *Le Premier soir:*

Toi qui fuis à pas inquiets;
Je t'avais pardonné ta faute.
Pourquoi t'en vast tu? Je croyais
Qu'on devait vivre côte à côte.

O nuits, ô douces nuits d'antan,
Où sont nos haltes et nos courses;
Le vieux saule près de l'étang,
Et les genêts au bord des sources? *

* You who flee with restless feet,
I had pardoned your transgression.
Why do you go away? I thought
That we were to live side by side.

But to make you really feel this I should have to quote the whole poem. As art M. le Goffic's poem is uncommon, genuine and finished. "These verses," says M. Paul Bourget, "produce a unique impression of melancholy, suffering, grace. They are, at the same time, very simple and highly accomplished. . . . Only Gabriel Vicaire and he can touch certain chords with this bow, the bow of a country fiddler who is also a great violinist." It would be impossible to better this; and, indeed, if the young Breton poet recalls any other poet it is the singer of Bresse, Gabriel Vicaire, with his exquisite rusticity.

M. Jules Simon, who has remained a Breton in Paris, in the midst of his fame, said a pretty thing one day: "I never come out of the Opera without thinking that I should be happy indeed to hear a *binion* † playing."

I am not a Breton, and I have only seen Brittany in those swift, wondering excursions that are like beautiful dreams. But on hearing Le Goffic's *binion* I seem to see once more the desolate beach, the golden bloom of the moors, the oaks rooted in the granite, the sombre green that edges the streams, and on the highways, bordered with rushes, at the foot of the Calvarys, peasant women as grave as nuns.

> O nights, O sweet nights of yesteryear,
> Where are our races, our moments of rest?
> The old willow near the pool,
> And the broom beside the springs?

† *Binion*, the Breton bagpipe.

ALBERT GLATIGNY

THE little town of Lillebonne, lying snugly in its green valley, with its Roman ruins and its Norman castle, its spinning-mills and bleach-works, was all bedecked with flags in honour of one of its sons, who was, in his lifetime, a strolling comedian and a most magnificent rhymer. His name was Albert Glatigny.

Before the bust about to be uncovered to the sound of trumpets Mademoiselle Nan recited some verses which were greatly applauded:

O vagabond! frère des dieux,
Qui, pour l'amour de la Chimère,
Grimpas vingt ans la côte amère,
Les pieds saignants, l'œil radieux.

Poète errant ou bateleur,
A qui l'hôte ferme la porte,
Tu dormais en plein champ? Qu'importe
Lorsque la luzerne est en fleur! . . .

Tu buvais l'eau des sources vives,
Tu t'attablais aux noisetiers;
Maigre festin; mais vous étiez,
La fauvette et toi, les convives.

Si, rousse et rouge, te bouda
La maritorne de l'auberge,
Tu voyais en leur neige vierge
Les trois déesses de l'Ida! . . . *

* For translation see bottom of next page.

It was Catulle Mendès who in this brotherly lyric invoked the poet whose fellow-singer and friend he was in the far-off days of Parnassus and the Parnassians.

Albert Glatigny died only eighteen years ago, but his life seems to have withdrawn into a far distant past, and he seems nearer to Destiny and the Star than the comedians who are playing in the provinces to-day. His adventures recall the picturesque comedians of Le Sage and Scarron, whose race is now extinct.

He was a tall, thin youth with long legs terminated by long feet. His hands, protruding from unduly short sleeves, were immense. In his beardless, bony face a huge mouth expanded, wide, impudent and affectionate. His eyes, deeply set above his red, prominent cheek-bones, were still merry in spite of fever. M. Louis Labat, who col-

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* O vagabond! brother of the gods,
Who, for love of Fancy
Didst climb for twenty years the bitter hill,
With bleeding feet but radiant eye. . . .

Wandering poet or buffoon,
To whom the host closes the door,
Dost thou sleep in the open field? What matter
When the lucerne is in flower! . . .

Thou didst drink water from the living springs,
Thou didst spread thy table by the hazels;
A meagre feast, but thou
And the hedge-sparrow were fellow-guests.

If, red of hair and face
The masculine hostess of the inn scolded thee,
Thou didst behold, in their virgin whiteness,
The three goddesses of Ida.

lected memories that had been preserved at Bayonne since 1807, said that he was hewn out with a bill-hook in the likeness of a scarecrow. When I saw him, four years later, he was absolutely fleshless. His skin, furrowed by the north wind and fever, was stretched over a strongly-built, grotesque frame-work. With his innocent effrontery, his ever-unsatisfied appetite, always on the alert, and his great longing to live, to love and to sing, he might very well have represented Panurge. He was Panurge, but Panurge on the moon. This strange youth's head was full of visions. His brain was full of heroes and romantic ladies in brocade gowns or coats of the time of Louis XIII; there they dwelt, there they danced and sang; it was a perpetual saraband. Anything else he never heard nor saw, and of this sublunary world he was only very vaguely aware. He never sought to improve his position in it, and he did not know how to avoid danger. While he dragged himself in rags along the highways, while cold, hunger and disease were destroying him, he lived in an enchanted dream. He saw himself arrayed in velvet and cloth of gold, drinking from goblets chiselled by Benvenuto Cellini to the duchesses of Este and Ferrara, who loved him.

It was his wont to declare that he was the son of a gendarme, and he liked to relate that when he ran away with some strolling players he had gone off in his father's boots. It so fell out that he had to cross the moors on foot, in company with the ingenue, whose shoes being too thin, were torn to ribbons by the sand. Moved by compassion, Glatigny gave her the gendarme's boots. However, the record of the poet's birth, published by M. Léon Braquehais, is worded thus: "Joseph-Albert-

Alexandre Glatigny, born at Lillebonne, the 21 May, 1849, of the marriage between Joseph-Sénateur Glatigny, journeyman carpenter, of this town, and Rose-Alexandre Masson, dressmaker of the same place."

It follows from this document that Joseph-Sénateur Glatigny of Lillebonne was a carpenter when a son was born to him, who was to become a poet. He was not a gendarme then. But, as M. Braquehais has remarked, he became one later. And if we may believe Théodore de Banville, this gendarme was brave as a lion and a grower of roses.

His son Albert became junior clerk to a bailiff, and was then apprenticed to the trade of compositor. He was working in a printing-press at Pont-Audemer, when a company of strolling players came to play in the town. He took his place in the *parterre*. What did he see in the glow of the footlights? Poor devils playing the part of great nobles, starving mummers in limp boots, rags and grimaces? Assuredly no! He saw a world of splendour and magnificence. The oil-spotted landscapes, the torn skies, were a revelation of Nature. There fine speeches, badly delivered, taught him passion; his eyes were unsealed; he saw, he believed, he adored. It was with the enthusiasm of a neophyte that he received the baptism of chaff and entered the confraternity. The mummers were good fellows, and they judged that the printer's apprentice could prompt for them as well as another. At need they even allowed him to try his hand in comedy and tragedy. It was not his ambition to smear his face with flour, to have a butterfly on the end of a wire at the back of his head, and to receive kicks as though he liked them;

but rather to wear a plumed hat, to drape himself in a Spanish cloak and to trail about with a rapier, a weapon deadly to traitors. Now, his Carnival face, his body, long as a day of fasting, his interminable feet, which came upon the scene long before he did, made him a wholly incongruous figure when clad in silks and velvets. And when you realize that, endowed with the purest of Norman accents, with the Bernay drawl, he was also afflicted with a stutter that made him eat half his words, you will recognize that he was hissed and hooted at in all justice, although he was a lyric poet. For as he went his way, in Alençon, having read the *Odes funambulesques,* he discovered that he was a poet, and at once he began to write exquisite and magnificent verses. "Verses with their music," said his excellent master, Théodore de Banville. And what made his life impossible and chimerical was that, having no other resources than writing excellent verses and playing comedy parts very badly, he nevertheless wanted to eat, to bask in God's sunlight and to enjoy, to a certain extent, the benefits of civilization. In order that his romance should be complete, in the depth of the winter, still dressed in nankeen, he fell in love with a princess of the boards, who, unfortunately, had no conception of poetical feeling. Overwhelmed by despair, he tried to plunge his penknife into his heart and succeeded in splitting his thumb. It must not be supposed, however, that he was very miserable. His poverty was extreme, but he did not feel it. He loved his vagabond life and in it he found ample scope for that picaresque spirit which animates his poetry. We may form some judgment of it from this charming irregular sonnet:

La route est gaie. On est descendu. Les chevaux
Soufflent devant l'auberge. On voit sur la voiture
Des objets singuliers jetés à l'aventure;
Des loques, une pique avec de vieux chapeaux.

Une femme, en riant, écoute les propos
Amoureux d'un grand drôle à la maigre structure,
Le père noble boit et le conducteur jure.
Le village s'émeut de ces profils nouveaux.

En route! et l'on repart. L'un sur l'impériale
Laisse pendre une jambe exagerée. Au loin
Le soleil luit, et l'air est plein d'odeur de foin.

Destin rêve, à demi couché sur une malle,
Et le roman comique au coin de la forêt
Tourne un chemin rapide et creux, et disparait.*

On re-reading an article, already of ancient date, which I wrote upon Albert Glatigny, I find in it a few anecdotes that were going the rounds after his death. I do not give them as being literally true;

* The road is gay. All have alighted. The horses
Are panting before the inn. One sees on the coach
Strange objects thrown down at random;
Tattered garments, a pike, and old hats.

A woman, laughing, listens to the amorous proposals
Of a tall rogue, sparely built.
The noble father is drinking and the conductor swearing.
The village is all agog at the sight of these fresh faces.

Drive on! They are off again. The man on the top
Dangles a monstrous leg. In the distance
The sun shines, and the air is full of the scent of hay.

Destiny dreams, half reclining on a mail-bag,
And comic romance, at the corner of the forest
Turns aside, swift and unsubstantial, and disappears.

but if they are legendary they form part of the earliest legend, which always contain a great deal of truth. Moreover, they are amusing; which is a reason for telling them. One must now and then amuse one's worthy public.

I shall tell you, then, that, according to the testimony of the best writers, Glatigny, finding himself in Paris, obtained from the manager of the Bouffes the part of the Passer-by in *Les Deux Aveugles*.

It is a silent part. This passer-by drops a copper into the hat of a blind man, and says nothing. It is said, and I find no difficulty in believing it, that one evening Glatigny had not a centime. In this conjuncture he turned his pockets inside out and said: "I have nothing to give you to-day, my good man." This speech cost him a heavy fine, but the player had devised an effect, and he felt justly proud of it.

About the same time he was playing the Third Senator in Alfred de Vigny's *Othello* at the Théâtre-Lyrique. He had to speak a line and a half of verse, and he drew two francs a night.

But here is the most memorable incident of his dramatic life. It was somewhere in the provinces, I know not where. They were playing Racine's *Andromaque,* for the author's sins. Glatigny had the modest part of Pylades, and he did not shine in it. Discontented with his success, and persuaded, like a good romantic, that Racine's text was insufficient, he added to its beauties. In Scene 2 of Act III, announcing the entrance of Hermione (I do not know who the Hermione was; Heaven grant that she is darning the stockings of her family in peace!), the Pylades from Lower Normandy recited

the three lines written by the author of *Andromaque* and added two more, which were total strangers to the text:

> Gardez qu'avant le coup votre dessein n'éclat ;
> Oubliez jusque-là qu'Hermione est ingrate;
> Oubliez votre amour. Elle vient, je la *vois*,
> Et si *celle* du sang n'est point une chimère,
> Tombe aux pieds de ce sexe à qui tu dois ta mère.*

The effect of these last two lines, soldered on to Racine's text, was marvellous. The cultivated inhabitants of the little town were beside themselves with admiration, and the sub-prefect himself gave the signal for applause.

Albert Glatigny had a heart of gold. On the days when he dined he shared his meal with Toupinel, a little terrier, thin and vagabond as his master. M. Louis Labat has enshrined the memory of Toupinel in the *Bulletin de la Société des sciences et arts de Bayonne.*

"Pay-days were days of orgy for Glatigny and him who he had raised to the rank of intimate friend. One following the other, they went, skirting the walls of the town, straight to the Café Fariné—he in a sort of ecstasy, his heart full of the seventy blessed francs which he had just drawn. Solemnly he sat himself before a solitary table, Toupinel facing him, and ordered two chops. The two chops being served, all smoking hot, it was at once a ridiculously droll and a touching spectacle

* Take heed lest before the blow your design be discovered;
Forget until then that Hermione is ungrateful;
Forget your love. She is coming, I *see* her,
And if *that* of the blood is not a vain fancy
Fall at the feet of this sex to which thou owest thy mother.

to see this great simple fellow cutting his comrade's share into dainty slices, offering him each mouthful with a tenderness positively maternal, and watching, with a melancholy air, the steam rising from his plate in transparent spirals; while the dog, sitting erect, savoured the least scrap of this feast like a gourmet. Certainly he had to take in enough to last a month. Toupinel, without a doubt, was aware of this; and he was careful not to waste a moment. As a rare occurrence these windfalls were sometimes repeated, but at essentially variable periods."

I was not acquainted with Toupinel, who must have ended his wandering existence about the year 1868. But I knew Cosette, who was rendered immortal by a sonnet. Cosette was of doubtful race and of common appearance, but she had plenty of spirit and a good heart. For many years one never saw Glatigny without Cosette. In a letter in which the poor actor relates with courageous gaiety the sufferings and the ill-treatment which he has endured, he adds: "My poor little bitch has received a kick in the belly which nearly killed her. For once, I wept." The circumstances in which Cosette was treated with such brutality were peculiar. They were described at length in *Le Temps* of the 17th January, 1891, on the first page. I will recall them, very briefly, according to the version given by the poet himself in a little book to-day unprocurable, entitled *Le Jour de l'an d'un vagabond*.

On the 1st January, 1869, after many adventures on the high-roads, Glatigny, who was then at Bocognano, in Corsica, was arrested by a gendarme and thrown into prison, where he remained for four days on a charge of having murdered a magis-

trate. The gendarme had taken him for Jud, who was being hunted for everywhere, but was found nowhere, for the sufficient reason that he did not exist. The gendarme of Bocognano was like the watch-dogs; he did not like badly dressed people, and his suspicions were aroused by the mere sight of the poet-player's travel-stained coat and breeches. At least, that is what the official report of his arrest reveals. In this we read:

"We have noticed this individual who looked to us like a fugitive from justice."

And, strangely enough, there was a deputy judge capable of replying: "Yes, yes, indeed, indeed," to this observation of the police, and of having Glatigny put into irons in a dungeon where Cosette courageously defended her master from the rats that sought to devour him. He was already stricken by the phthisis of which he was to die, and his condition was aggravated in the unhealthy prison of Bocognano.

Returning to Normandy in 1870, he met there a young girl who had fled thither from the German invasion: Mademoiselle Emma Dennie. She loved him for his kind heart, his talent as a poet and, above all, because he was unfortunate. She consented to marry him, and, attacked by the same disease, became his nurse. This charming woman provided a home for the poor vagabond, whose wanderings, alas, were over. After the war they went to live at Sèvres, near Paris, in a little house at the foot of the hill, by the side of a steep lane furrowed by the rains.

It was there that Albert Glatigny died, on the 16th April, 1873, in his thirty-fifth year. He had written:

. . . Que l'on m'enterre un matin
De soleil, pour que nul n'essuie,
Suivant mon cortège incertain,
De vent, de bourrasque ou de pluie;
Car n'ayant jamais fait de mal
A quiconque ici, je désire,
Quand mon cadavre sépulcral
Aura la pâleur de la cire,
Ne pas, en m'en allant, occire
Des suites d'un rhume fâcheux
Quelque pauvre dévoué sire
Qui suivra mon corps de faucheux.*

His friends attended him to the Sèvres cemetery (as I remember) on one of those Spring mornings when the rain and the sunlight mingle like a smile on a tearful face.

He left behind him the brilliant verses of his *Vignes folles* and *Flèches d'or*. As a poet Glatigny derives from Banville, with a subtle tincture of his own. And the artist must endeavour to seize these delicate shades. Glatigny's work has its value, and the municipal authorities of Lillebonne were happily inspired in honouring the memory of its son, who was a poor man, but who, during his innocent life, forgot all his woes in singing his songs.

* Let them bury me on a morning
Of sunshine, so that none shall suffer,
Following my rambling procession,
Wind, or squalls, or rain;
For having never done harm
To anyone, here, I do not wish,
When my body, ready for burial,
Is pale as wax,
As I am going, to kill,
By the sequel of a troublesome cold,
Some poor devoted fellow
Following my spider-like body.

M. MARCEL SCHWOB *

HERE are far fewer readers of short stories than of novels, for the sufficient reason that only the fastidious reader is able to savour the excellence of a short story, while the gluttonous devour novels indifferently, whether good, middling or bad. There is never a newspaper serial, however insipid or tough, that is not swallowed down to the last slice by some poor soul starving for substantial reading.

The gluttons are numerous on this terraqueous globe where men are given to eating. For nine readers out of ten, a novel is a dish with which they like to stuff themselves; they like to be head over ears in it. Accordingly the purveyors in ordinary to the public possess an incomparable skill in manufacturing novels as compact and heavy as pasties. They stuff their customers; they cram them until they are stupid. They know their world. The true novel-reader only wants to be stupefied.

He reads through a novel in one evening, and he would be quite incapable of reading anything but a novel. He reads very quickly, for nothing stops him, and when he has finished he has not the least idea of what he has read. This kind of reader is not rare, and it is for him that our worthy fiction-mongers write.

There would be no great harm in this if, to en-

* *Cœur double,* with preface, 1 vol.

large their circle of readers, writers of talent did not persist in producing novel after novel and did not go out of their way to say in four hundred pages what they could have said far better in ten or twenty. I do not complain of the bad novels written without art for uneducated readers. Innumerable though they are, they do not count. But I do protest when I see so many mediocre novels written by men of some value and read by a cultivated public. Of these as many as three or four are published every week, and their rising tide is drowning us. I marvel that intelligent men of good judgment who are not unread should find pleasure in manufacturing for the public every year a volume of fiction, and that they should cheerfully devote themselves to this sort of work without reflecting that our century, supposing it to be in this respect more fortunate than those preceding it, will leave behind it at most a score of readable novels. It is, however, if we come to think of it, an excessive pretension to seek to impose three hundred and fifty pages of imaginary incidents on the public once a year! In how much better taste is the tale or the short story! How much more delicate a medium! Discreeter, and better calculated to please the intelligent reader, whose life is full, and who knows the value of time. Is not brevity the supreme mark of good breeding in the writer? The short story is sufficient for all purposes; in this form of fiction a great deal of meaning can be contained in a few words. A well-constructed short story is the delight of the connoisseur, and the exacting reader finds contentment therein. It is an elixir, a quintessence, a precious ointment. I admire Balzac infinitely; I regard him

as the greatest historian of modern France, and the whole country lives in his stupendous work. But I prefer to *La Cousine Bette* and *Le Père Goriot,* as a matter of art and style, one of his simple short stories; for example, *La Grenadière* or *La Femme abandonnée.* Accordingly I intend no faint praise of M. Schwob when I say that he has published an excellent collection of short stories. M. Schwob has entitled his book *Cœur double;* his reasons for doing so I do not very clearly understand, even though he has explained them at length in his preface. This preface pleases me, because it speaks of Euripides and Shakespeare and breathes a fervent love of letters. But I dare not flatter myself that I clearly understand it. M. Schwob, like a new Apuleius, is fond of affecting the accent of a literary mystic. It does not displease him that the torches should smoke at the Muses' banquet. I believe he would even be rather annoyed if I had too easily penetrated the mysteries of his ethic and the silent orgies of his æsthetic. He is greatly occupied with Aristotle, who considered that the tragic poet should correct terror by pity, and he flatters himself that in his *Cœur double* he has observed this precept of the Stagyrite. He may be right, but I am not impressed by his argument, and I am quite unable to discover the mysterious tie which in his opinion unites his tales and makes them an indivisible whole. I am not acquainted with M. Schwob. I am told that he is very young, and that being so, his preface may be regarded as one of the delightful follies of youth.

At his age I was not content if I had not, in the course of the morning, explained the universe under the plane-trees of the Luxembourg. In those days I believe I should have been capable—except of

course for the talent—of writing a preface like this of M. Schwob's. I am referring merely to its riotous generosity of general ideas. But I know of no one but M. Schwob who, while still quite young, could have written such narratives, so vigorous in style, so sure in their development and so powerful in feeling. He promises us Terror and Pity. I have seen but little of Pity, but I have felt the Terror. M. Schwob is henceforth revealed as a master of the art of evoking all the phantoms of fear and communicating a new shudder to his hearers. Although occasionally he derives from Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Dickens (the influence of Dickens is perceptible in *Le Squelette*), although he displays a natural and methodical aptitude for imitating the most varied forms of art, although one of his tales is most excellent Petronius, while another recalls the Oriental apologues of the Abbé Blanchet, and another might have been borrowed from some Buddhist volume, he is none the less original; he has a composite manner which is peculiar to himself, and he has invented a mode of the fantastic which is sincere and individual. It would be rather difficult to define this fantastic quality or to reveal its sources. M. Schwob does not appear to be particularly credulous; he has no partiality for the miraculous; he refuses to have anything to say to the spiritualists, and, far from investing the performances of the spirits with poetry and passion, as M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry has done in his *Rediviva,* he derides Monsieur Medium with a ponderous, terrible gaiety slightly flavoured with ale and gin. As for the Magians, who are now so numerous, and so valiant in the matter of writing bulky treatises, he doubts the efficacy of their science, if we are to

judge by what he says (in the story *Les Œufs*) of Nébuloniste, the magician of a certain king of Fairyland. "He was a pupil of the magi of Persia; he had digested all the precepts of Zoroaster and Sakyamuni; he had gone back to the cradle of all the religions and had steeped himself in the higher morality of the gymnosophists. But, as a general thing, the only service which he performed for the king was to tell his fortune by the cards." This is all the magic I have been able to find in *Cœur double;* we do not, as in M. Joséphin Péladan's writings, meet with an old German doctor, enamoured of æsthetics, who visits by night, in his astral body, the beautiful woman who was so imprudent as to fasten her garter beneath the window at which he was breathing the fresh air, and dreaming of the Cnidian Aphrodite. M. Schwob is not tempted by novel theories of "the beyond." The old theories leave him equally incredulous. In his hands the fantastic is wholly internal; it results from the peculiar structure of the minds which he examines, or the picturesqueness of the superstitions that haunt his characters, or merely from a wild idea entertained by very simple persons. He shows us neither spectres nor phantoms; he shows us the victims of hallucination. And their hallucinations are quite enough to terrify us. Nothing could be more terrifying than the rich Roman freedman, another Trimalcio, who saw vampires devouring a corpse:

> Suddenly the crowing of the cock startled me and an icy breath of the morning breeze rustled the tops of the poplars. I was leaning against the wall; through the window I saw the sky, now of a lighter grey, and to eastward a streak of white and rosy pink. I rubbed my eyes, and when I looked at my mistress I saw—may the gods help me!—that her body was covered with black bruises,

dark blue spots, large as the ace on a card—yes, as large as an ace—scattered all over her skin. Then I shouted and ran toward the bed; the face was a waxen mask, beneath which one saw the flesh hideously gnawed; no nose was left, no lips, no cheeks, no eyes; the birds of the night had pierced them with their sharp beaks, like plums. And each blue patch was a funnel-shaped hole, at the bottom of which gleamed a clot of blood; and there was no heart, no lungs, no viscera whatever; for the chest and abdomen were stuffed with wisps of straw.

See also the tale of the three Breton *gabelous* who pursue the galleon of Captain Jean Florin on the seas. This galleon, loaded with the treasures of Montezuma, never came to land. Here again, in this story of the phantom vessel, the terror is produced by a gross and poetical superstition which the narrator compels us to share with the three sailors.

One may say of M. Schwob, as of Ulysses, that he is subtle and acquainted with the various ways of men. In his tales are pictures of all periods, from the age of the polished stone implement down to our own. But M. Schwob has a special liking, a predilection for those very simple beings, heroes or criminals, in whom ideas are revealed in crude, unmitigated, violent colours.

I do not know whether he is a Breton; his name does not seem to point to it; but his most skilfully drawn characters, those depicted with the most picturesque and sympathetic touch, are Bretons, soldiers or sailors (see *Poder, Les Noces d'Ary, Pour Milo* and *Les Trois Gabelous*).

In any case, this Breton can at need speak the purest Parisian argot. He talks slang, as far as I can judge, with an elegance that even M. Victor Measy might envy.

He loves crime for its picturesqueness. Of the

last night of Cartouche in the Courtille he has given us a picture in the manner of Jeaurat, the painter in ordinary of Mam'selle Javotte and Mam'selle Masson, with a certain exquisite quality which Jeaurat has not. And in his studies of the outer boulevards M. Schwob recalls the pencil of Raffaelli, whom he surpasses in perverse and melancholy poetry.

What shall I say in conclusion? There are nearly forty tales in *Cœur double*. These tales are all curious or unusual, full of strange emotion, with a sort of magic in their art and their style. Five or six of them—*Les Stryges, Le Dom, La Vendeuse d'ambre, La Dernière Nuit, Poder* and *Fleur de cinq pierres*—are, of their kind, actual masterpieces.

MADAME DE LA SABLIÈRE

FROM UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

I

HAVE been furnished with fifty-three letters, addressed by Madame de la Sablière to the Abbé de Rancé, between March, 1687, and January, 1693. This correspondence has never been published. It is, I think, of sufficient value to be offered to the public, at least, as regards its more touching portions.

Madame de la Sablière is chiefly known for having offered a gracious hospitality to La Fontaine; her memory, associated with that of the poet, is deserving of a faithful memorial. For the rest, the lady is in herself extremely interesting. She had an active, inquiring spirit, a restless mind and an inflammable heart. Like so many other women, she divided her life into two parts; one was devoted to profane and one to divine love. Her repentance aroused some admiration in a society well accustomed to see ladies end their lives in this fashion. Never was conversion more sincere than Madame de la Sablière's. But in changing her mode of life she by no means changed her heart, and we may say that she loved God as she had loved M. de la Fare. The letters of which I speak were written after her conversion. They are spiritual discourses of extreme ardour, whose monotony would be fatiguing did we

not feel in them, beneath the vagueness of the language, the impulses of the soul.

Marguerite Hessin, born of a middle-class family of the reformed religion, married, in 1654, at the age of twenty-four, Antoine de Rambouillet de la Sablière, son of the financier Rambouillet, who, the holder of one of the five great "farms," had laid out some magnificent gardens, at great expense, in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, which were known as *les Folies-Rambouillet*. Antoine de la Sablière was King's Councillor and a Councillor of the Finances, steward of the Crown domains, and wealthy enough to lend forty thousand crowns to the Prince de Condé. They had three children in three years: Nicolas, the eldest, in 1656; Anne in 1657; and Marguerite in 1658.

In those days there were learned women. Madame de la Sablière was one of them, and she cut a certain figure in the group of *libertins* and *libertines*. Libertinage, as people understood the term in those days, was a tendency to believe in nothing without saying so too emphatically. The *libertins* formed a small but very brilliant society. The king tolerated their discreet impiety at table and in his private circle, for it was far less dangerous to the peace of the Church than the spirited disputes of the solitaries of Port-Royal.

While M. de la Sablière, who was an amiable gentleman, wrote little poems to the ladies, his wife threw herself with enthusiasm into the study of philosophy and science. She took lessons from the aged mathematician Roberval. Saint-Evremond corresponded with her. Bernier was an inmate of her house; Bernier, known as the genteel philosopher, who had travelled in Syria, Egypt, India and Persia;

who had acted as physician to Aurungzebe; who, having been everywhere and back again, had a great deal to say, was perpetually studying, and believed in little or nothing. He made, for Madame de la Sablière, an abridgment of the system of Gassendi, his master; which abridgment occupied no less than eight volumes.

Madame de la Sablière's house was a hostelry for the learned. She even extended her hospitality to a geometrician, young Sauveur, who afterwards became one of the greatest French mathematicians. Surpassing Armande in her zeal for knowledge, she would visit Dalancé in the morning, to make experiments with the microscope, and in the evening she would attend a dissection at the house of the physician Verney. At the age of thirty she was famous. King Sobieski, passing through Paris, went to see her. She was, in truth, the Uranian Venus descended upon earth. She threw herself into the study of science with an all-devouring curiosity, and all the ardour of a soul that never relinquished a subject until it was exhausted. She was not in the least affected, still less was she a pedant, whatever Boileau may have thought after she had wounded his self-love as a rhymester.

Boileau was an excellent humanist, with a judicious mind, but no great curiosity. He shut himself up all his life in the circle of *belles-lettres,* and remained a stranger to the physical and natural sciences. Accordingly it sometimes happened that he employed, in his verses, scientific terms of which he did not know the meaning. When Madame de la Sablière read his *Epîtres* she was pulled up short, in the fifth *Epître,* by these lines:

Que, l'astrolabe en main, un autre aille chercher
Si le soleil est fixe et tourne sur son axe,
Si Saturne à ses yeux peut faire un parallaxe. . . . *

She marked this passage with a finger-nail and made game of the poet who spoke of an astrolabe without knowing what it was, and who said *un parallaxe* when he should have said *une parallaxe*, as did all men of learning; and who, finally, did not seem to have a very correct idea of the planetary movements. The regent of Parnassus, discovered blundering like a schoolboy and corrected by a woman, was greatly displeased. She thought him unduly ignorant; he thought her unduly learned and bore her a grudge for it. His judgment was good and his heart was in the right place; but as a satirist he was vindictive by profession. Meditating a poetical revenge, he polished and repolished in his head a few lines intended to find a place in his satire on women. I cannot say in what corner of the woods, according to his custom, he hit upon these lines; I will content myself with affirming that the shade of the worthy Chrysale,‡ replacing the Muse, provided him with the inspiration. The poet, without naming her, alludes to

. . . cette savante,
Qu'estime Roberval et que Sauveur fréquente.§

---

* Let another enquire, astrolabe† in hand,
Whether the sun is fixed and turns upon its axis,
Whether Saturn, to his eyes, may make a parallax.

† The astrolabe, a predecessor of the sextant, was a small instrument used in observing the position of a heavenly body. It could not possibly afford any evidence as to the rotation of the sun. (Editor.)

‡ One of the characters in Molière's *Femmes Savantes*.—Editor.

§ . . . that learned lady
Whom Roberval esteems and with whom Sauveur converses.

And in his eagerness to prick the learned lady in a sensitive spot he conceived the idea of asserting that astronomy was wearing out her eyes and spoiling her complexion. In a moment of calculated enthusiasm, he inquires:

> D'où vient qu'elle a l'œil trouble et le teint si terni?
> C'est que, sur le calcul, dit-on, de Cassini.
> Un astrolabe en main, elle a, dans sa gouttière.
> A suivre Jupiter passé la nuit entière.*

We perceive that the astrolabe stuck in his gizzard and that he was pleased to be able to show that he was at last acquainted with its proper use. We do not know whether the arrow was loosed and whether Madame de la Sablière was wounded by it. The irreproachable Boileau, satisfied that he had the power to avenge himself, did not use it. *Satis est potuisse videri.* His verses remained in manuscript.

A fashionable poet, he would not have been forgiven for offending a woman. Moreover, he would not have had all the laughers on his side, and a few gentlemen might have repaid him for his rhymes by giving him a good drubbing one night at the street corner. Such incidents were fairly frequent in those days. Madame de la Sablière, without great beauty, it would seem, or very good health, was charming and understood the art of pleasing. Her house was not open only to the learned and to poets. People of the Court circles used to sup there, and these suppers must have been cheerful functions; the Abbé de Chaulieu set the tone of them. With him began the species of drawing-room Abbé that was

* Whence comes it that her eye is clouded and her colour so faded?
It is because, going (they say) by Cassini's calculation,
An astrolabe in hand, she has, on her roof,
Passed the whole night following Jupiter.

very soon to be found in swarms round every woman of rank. Chapelle had taught him in the *cabaret* to write songs. He made use of this humble talent at Madame de la Sablière's suppers, which were attended by Rochefort, Brancas, the Duc de Foy, Lauzan and a few other madcaps. La Grande Mademoiselle, who had certain rights over Lauzan's heart, found that he frequented the Folies-Rambouillet too assiduously, and took offence accordingly. There were those who tried to put her off the scent. "Is it for La Grande Mademoiselle," they would say, "to trouble herself about a little woman of the city called La Sablière?" But Henry IV's granddaughter was only half reassured.

Certainly Madame de la Sablière had a very bad reputation. To inquire how far she may have deserved it is a delicate matter. But it certainly seems that she was, above all, somewhat lacking in prudence; that she did not sufficiently make sacrifices to public opinion; and, to speak the language of the time, that she took too little care of her good fame. At heart she was passionate rather than voluptuous. And Bernier, who lived in her house, considered that she was biassed. It is true that he thought the same of Ninon. Discussing the mortification of the senses with Saint-Evremond one day, he said:

"I am going to tell you something in confidence that I should not tell Madame de la Sablière or even Mademoiselle de Lenclos, whom I regard as being of a superior order; I am going to tell you in confidence that abstinence from pleasure appears to me a great sin."

And this remark teaches us that Madame de la Sablière was not quite so far advanced in the

Epicurean philosophy as the great Ninon, who herself, according to Bernier, had yet some progress to make. Events were to prove that Bernier was correct. Madame de la Sablière loved La Fare; and nothing is more antithetical than love and the wisdom of Epicurus. La Fare was a handsome fellow who had a cold and comfortable temperament; he was a highly discreet sensualist. He allowed himself to be loved at the outset, and for some time he even displayed a certain ardour. His table companions, whom he neglected, made game of him. Chaulieu told him: "They'll put you in place of the turtle-dove, as the symbol of fidelity."

In the opening of 1677 he sold his commission as sub-lieutenant of the Dauphin's gendarmes. He himself has given the reasons that impelled him to leave the service. To a request for a merited promotion, Louvois had replied by a violent refusal. "This reply," says La Fare, "together with the bad condition of my affairs, my idleness and the love of a woman who deserved it, all made me decide to resign my commission." We see that Madame de la Sablière counts for at most a fourth part of this decision. La Fare's feeling for her, which seems to have been fairly intense at first, cooled very quickly. Madame de la Sablière found him daily less assiduous, more absent-minded. The poor lady's torments were thenceforward incessant; she had, without respite, to endure "clumsy excuses, intricate justifications, artificial conversations, and signs of his impatience to escape."

This cooling passion did not escape the malignity of the world. Some accused Madame de la Sablière of inconstancy; others, better informed, undertook her defence.

"No, no," said these, "she still loves her dear Philadelphos; it is true that they do not see one another nearly so often, in order to live a sober life, and that, instead of spending twelve hours at her house, for example, he is there only for seven or eight. But the lady's heart is still full of tenderness, passion, discrimination and perfect fidelity, and whosoever says the contrary is guilty of untruth."

However, La Fare loosed the ties that were beginning to try his patience. An enemy of all constraint, he gradually resumed his cherished liberty. He supped at the house as before: Madame Champmeslé provided him with a certain amount of occupation. Further, if we are to believe the brazen little Abbé de Chaulieu, La Fare alighted one evening at Madame de la Sablière's door with Louison. Madame soon had a fresh rival, more formidable than all the rest: the game of basset.

This card-game, introduced into France by the Venetian ambassador, was then in all its novelty. Fontenelle, in the *Lettres du chevalier d'Her . . .*, complained of this game that it was prejudicial to gallantry. "This accursed basset," he writes, "has come to depopulate the empire of love, and it is the greatest plague that the wrath of heaven could have sent upon us. One might call this game the art of growing old quickly." Sauveur drew up a table of probabilities to show that certain moves were more advantageous than others. The public believed that this table taught how one could play with the certainty of winning, and the madness of the players was redoubled. Despite the Horatian moderation on which La Fare prided himself, he became one of the most persistent players. He passed his days and nights at Saint-Germain, before the cards, with con-

gested features. He lost a good deal, for the report of his bad luck reached even La Fontaine, then in the green shade of his native countryside.

While he played, Madame de la Sablière was consumed with grief and vexation, pining in fever and in tears. M. de la Sablière, on his part, was dying of grief. After the sudden death of Mademoiselle Manon de Vaughangel, whom he loved, he collapsed, languished for a year, and died on the 3rd of May, 1679, being in his fifty-sixth year, after twenty-five years of marriage.

When two years had elapsed M. de la Fare displayed such negligence that all saw that the connection was at an end. And this negligence was regarded as blameworthy; we may even say that it caused a scandal. Madame de Coulanges remarked upon it to the indignant fair. She no longer saluted M. de la Fare, and said roundly:

"He has deceived me!"

Madame de la Sablière, although she still loved, could no longer retain her illusions. She was at an age when women have need of love if they are to retain their beauty. Since she was deserted she felt that she no longer had anything to do in this world. Betrayed, despairing, aged, assailed by funereal images, she proceeded to lay before God her ruined health, her wasted beauty and her still glowing heart.

II

In the rural quarter of the Luxembourg, at the junction of the Rue de Sèvres and the Rue du Bac, there was then, amid the market-gardens, a vast building whose front extended over a length of six

French *toises,* or some two hundred and fifty paces. The interior of the building contained eleven courtyards, two kitchen-gardens, eight wells, a cemetery and a church surmounted by a steeple. This was the hospital established in 1637 by Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld. In it men and women were received who, according to the words of the ordinance of foundation, "being deprived of fortune and succour, had not even the consolation of foreseeing a termination of the misfortunes with which they were afflicted." The people used to call it the Hospital for Incurables, giving it the name which was most commonly used. Madame de la Sablière entered this house to share with the Grey Sisters in the care of the sick. Madame de Sévigné, who received the news of her retreat at Les Rochers, communicated it to her daughter, with that smiling abundance of words which was natural to her.

"Madame de la Sablière," she says, "is in her Incurables, very thoroughly cured of a malady which was for some time thought incurable, and recovery from which causes more rejoicing than is the case with any other sickness. She is in this blessed state: she is devout, and sincerely devout." And here the epistolary Marquise praises God, quotes Saint Augustine, and in her airy fashion reconciles grace with freewill.

Madame de la Sablière was a widow. Her two daughters were married. Her son remained attached to the reformed religion. This very year, in 1680, he published, through Barbin, in a small duodecimo volume, his father's madrigals. There was no longer anything to keep her in the world, which she hated because she had expected too much of it. However, she did not entirely break with the society in

which she had lived her best years; she retained her house and her servants. She was then living in a fine hôtel in the Rue Saint-Honoré, whose gardens extended as far as those of the Feuillants, the convent of the Conception, and the Tuileries. There she gave shelter to La Fontaine, who had been with her for some seven or eight years. "She provided for his needs," says the Abbé d'Olivet, "persuaded that he was hardly capable of providing for them himself." It was this fine house and these beautiful shady gardens that she left in order to nurse the sick at the end of the uncouth Rue du Bac. Although devout and a penitent, she received and paid calls. She still took an interest in the works of her domestic poet, or at least she pretended to do so, out of kindness, to please him; since having sent some verses to Racine from Château-Thierry, La Fontaine begs his friend to show them to no one, Madame de la Sablière not having seen them yet. And it should be noted that this was in 1686, when Madame de la Sablière was deeply sequestered in her retreat.

It was a little while after this that she placed herself under the spiritual guidance of the Abbé de Rancé. Armand-Jean le Bouthillier, Abbé de Rancé, was then in the sixty-first year of his life and the twelfth of his retreat. The restorer of the Trappist order, he ended in penitence a life whose beginnings were scandalous. In his youth he had been, like Retz, an ambitious and amorous prelate. The death of Madame de Montbazon, whom he loved, had resulted in a change of heart and the reformation of his life. But he retained in his new life his indomitable spiritual energy and his indefatigable mental activity. From his monk's cell he

disputed with the Benedictines, who were dismayed by his ascetic fury, and corresponded with the greatest scholars. His knowledge of the world, whose pleasures and honours he had exhausted, joined to the inflexibility of a character to which hesitation was unknown, made him extremely apt for what the Church calls spiritual direction. In particular, he was admirable in his handling of aristocratic sinners. The Princess Palatine had consulted him several times in respect to difficulties of the conscience, and the two of them maintained a correspondence which was terminated only by the death of the illustrious penitent.

Madame de la Sablière was able to ensure that the hand which had drawn up maxims for Anne de Gonzaga should draw up rules of life for her. She was full of gratitude and love for her director. Fifty-three letters have been placed in my hands, dating from the 14th January, 1687, to (?) January, 1693. I have not seen the originals, and there is every reason to believe that they are lost. But I have before me copies made in the seventeenth century, in a quarto manuscript-book. I shall publish a few extracts from these, regretting that I can do no more, for these letters seem to me to be a noble monument of the literature of mysticism.

First I will quote a few lines from the first letter, confessing to an ignorance which would be unpardonable in an editor, but which will perhaps be excused in a newspaper article. I do not know the name of the confessor of whom Madame de la Sablière speaks. I thought at first that he might be Père Rapin. This priest was an acquaintance of La Fare's. Although this is not an argument, I had Rapin in my mind. But he died in 1687, and

Madame de la Sablière's confessor quitted this world at the end of 1688, as we learn from one of the letters to Rancé that are now before me. We know at least that he was not a Jansenist, since he was appointed her confessor by the Trappist Abbé, who was hostile enough to Port-Royal.

14 *March*, 1687.

You know, my most Reverend Father, how I have through you him who directs me. The difficulty I have had in subjecting myself to this law none but God knows. I have made him a general confession, of which I thought I should die at his feet. For a very long time after this I could not look at him and could only approach him with an emotion which I cannot describe. All this, in my mind, and in nature, seemed to me natural enough, but for more than six months now I have derived a very great satisfaction from being with him, for, although I have made it an inviolable law never to argue with a man in whose hands I have been placed by the order of God, since I have been placed in them by your order, I will nevertheless tell you that I am convinced that this is what I needed. . . .

To abridge my last confession, I found myself in such a state at his feet that the blood rose to my head. I was attacked by a bleeding at the nose, and I cannot describe to you what I suffered. . . . I am beside myself directly I approach him. I dare not tell him of my condition, as it now is, although I have told him something of it, because I am afraid it would cause him pain. I appeal to your charity which I have proved to be limitless. I feel that a word from you will calm me so that it will influence me as though it came from God Himself. The respect which I have for you and that which I have felt about this make me believe without doubting that I owe you my salvation.

At heart she was not altogether pleased with her confessor. She found him too easy-going, too gentle, too prone to middle courses, with which she, in the ardour of her soul, had no patience.

He bade her break with the world slowly, little by little, and not suddenly to abandon her position

in it. He was not even fully persuaded that she should get rid of her *hôtel* in the Rue Saint-Honoré.

3 *March, Wednesday, December* (1688).

For a long time I have wanted to give up the house which I have in the Rue Saint-Honoré. But as he in whose hands you have placed me allowed rather than approved of my action I have regarded the matter with an indifference that has often made me think that I shall never stir from my place. However, some people have suddenly come on the scene and taken over my lease from Easter. Thus I have no other house than this and a little one in which I put the few people I have. As I am neither approved nor supported in this I have taken for midsummer a much cheaper house than the one I had in which to spend the coming winter in this quarter. And yet I should much like to spend eight months here, which seems to me to astonish the reverend father under whom I am.

I confess to you that I cannot wonder enough on seeing how little people withdrawn from the world have the spirit of retreat. . . . This is my condition. I am leaving nothing in the world that I regret or that I should wish for under any circumstances. Yet I find myself in a certain state of destitution and abandonment that make me afraid of myself. When I wake in the night I have palpitations of the heart merely at the thought that I am, so it seems to me, alone in the world. And in this state I never think of anything but you and your house whose happiness I envy only because I see that those who live in it are at peace in the state of deprivation in which I, as I have shown you, experience so much perturbation. . . . It is certain that I have never in my life desired so greatly to surrender myself to God. All that I see and hear in this age, despite myself, for I ask for no news of anything, makes me long to be in a desert.

The reader will have noted in this letter the passage in which Madame de la Sablière speaks of the house in which she has placed the few people whom she still has. It is probable that she includes La Fontaine among these few people. We know that she did not send him away and that he was still in her house when she died. I think it may be

interesting to compare with this passage a few lines of a letter which she wrote to Rancé on the 1st April, 1689:

As for my servants, I am trying, by gentleness, and by conduct opposed to the bad example that I have afforded them, to restore them to a sense of duty toward God. For I am little fitted to speak to them positively, and my past life returns to my mind so clearly directly I am ready to blame anyone that I always tell myself what other people would tell me. However, there is no positive irregularity.

Among these servants, whom she dare not reprove after having scandalized them, and whom she seeks only to improve by example, and who, moreover, are not positively leading an irregular life, she doubtless still includes La Fontaine. We may readily persuade ourselves that this is the case, understanding the word used (*domestique*), in the old sense, as defined in Trévoux, 1771: "Domestic, comprises all those who are subordinate to any person, who compose his household, who dwell in his house or are reputed to live there, as stewards, secretaries, clerks, agents: sometimes the word means even more, and is extended to the wife and children."

Her confessor being dead, she had another who mortified her much more cruelly than the first, imposed upon her a much sterner discipline than his predecessor, having no belief that she had a vocation for the religious life or that she could find salvation in retreat. She complains of this to Rancé:

. . . 1688.

. . . I have felt very bitter about what I am going to explain to you, concerning which I am consulting you not in order to ask if I must endure it, for I am assured of this, and have determined to do so, but only to know how you would wish me to act. The man with whom I have to do is so amazed at the life which

I am leading that he expressed his astonishment last time I saw him with words that showed me that he was excessively hurt by it. I replied with as much gentleness as I could, but firmly. On the following day he wrote to me in these terms:

"I do not know when I stand with you and I find myself so strictly entrusted with your soul, which I think lost." And I told him in reply as though it were mine something that you did me the honour of saying in one of your letters, that if there were some imperfection in my divorce from the world I hoped that God would not impute it to me. I dare not send you the rest of his letter which is only full of verbiage that would not help you to understand this mental attitude, which I cannot in the least realize. . . . If I speak to him of my inclination for a life of retirement and the reasons which have led me to it he does not vouchsafe me a word; if I say: If I weary of it, my father, I shall tell you, but that has not happened to me yet, he replies: I shall very soon get you out of it. . . . This is not to complain that I hope for no help from that quarter. . . . I therefore appeal to your charity, most revered father, begging you to assist me, because you alone can do so; I feel this to a point that cannot be known to you as it is, but God knows it. . . .

We see by subsequent letters that Rancé upheld her in her desire for a life of absolute retirement and assured her that solitude was in reality very beneficial to her.

At last she was able to satisfy this austere desire. In accordance with a custom followed by many rich and pious widows of the period, she went to live at the Incurables with one serving-woman.

She who was formerly courted by Brancas and de Foix, she whom La Fontaine and Chaulieu had sung in their verses, naming her Iris, she who was present with Ninon at that supper at which Molière and Boileau composed the Latin of *Le Malade imaginaire,* now sought happiness by new paths, restricting her life to the ward of a hospital and a frigid church adorned only by the austere paintings of Philippe de Champaigne; she prayed, fasted,

meditated upon Saint Dorothy, and, for amusement embroidered altar-cloths. Sickness and age, alas, had made her only too ripe for devotion!

29 July, 1692.

It is a long time, most reverend father, since I have permitted myself the honour of writing to you. I have no fear that you will think that this is due to forgetfulness. It is often out of discretion that I deprive myself of the pleasure. This time it was due to a scruple. I did not want to tell you something that I am persuaded will give you pain, and I would still rather leave you in ignorance of it. A few days before Whitsuntide I noticed a hardness in the breast, on the right side, which was rather painful. I did not want to say anything about it, but after suffering for some days I thought that the surgeon on the premises (she refers to the surgeon to the Incurables, among whom were many sufferers from cancer) having more experience than anyone in this kind of malady, I had better let him see it. He told me at once that I must have been suffering from the disease for at least two years, and that it was of a very malignant nature. I told him how I have been living for a long time past. He told me that far from this diet (eggs and milk, etc.) being harmful to me, he believed that God had permitted this way of life to mitigate the disease. I tell you this to make sure that you should not be troubled in this respect (it was Rancé who prescribed this diet). No one in the world knows what I am giving myself the honour of telling you, save the man whom I have mentioned and you. I do not think you will disapprove of my conduct in this respect. You perceive that I should enter into useless discussions, and you will realize the real inconvenience that I should suffer at the hands of those who, still seeing me, would redouble their care, which I find extremely oppressive. For if I could no longer see anyone on earth the condition that I am in would be a true Paradise to me. As long as I lived in the world I always feared this malady with the horror with which Nature inspires one.

Since my conversion I have not thought of it. When I perceived it I prostrated myself before our Lord with tears and implored Him with intense feeling that He would take this from me or give me patience to endure it. I can assure you that from that moment I have been conscious of no desire in this connection, God having vouchsafed me the mercy of adding to the tran-

quillity which I had before that, a calm that I cannot describe to you. It seems to me that it is an effect of God's love for me that has so greatly increased that which I had in my heart that I am all the more filled with it. What troubles me is a certain indolence which seems sometimes to incline me to go to bed earlier or to rise later. I might perhaps exercise greater punctuality in this respect, and indeed I think I am doing so. For I feel, too, that this draws my attention to the pain. After all it is impossible, and I realize it every moment, that my days should not be full of lapses from duty. This is the only grief that I have and I am nowhere near the end of it, for I greatly fear that I shall see it end only with my life, the memory of which makes me tremble. This is the truth, and if what I feel in this connection were not sometimes shot through with hope I should be overwhelmed by it. What is inconceivable in this malady is that it brings with it the feeling of a great number of ills which one is not suffering from at all, since, in fact, it appears to be unique. However, I can truthfully tell you that such suffering does not last as much as an hour, although I always have some pain. I had never conceived that this could be, I who have had enough grief in my life, but every one bears his particular sorrow. I believe then, my reverend father, if you will allow me, that I must remain as it pleases God to situate me. I have not, thanks to His mercy, any impatience to be delivered from it, nor any anxiety to bear; is not that a great thing? After this explanation I shall no longer need to trouble you with the same matter at such length. I shall, I think, make myself plainly understood by speaking in a general manner of my health, of which I shall take the liberty of giving you a faithful account, since I have brought myself to tell you what I found it so difficult not to tell you. I feel the joy and consolation that I shall receive from what you will have the charity to tell me, by that which I feel in conversing with you. I sometimes see M. D. She is going, it seems to me, straight to God, and with a lack of constraint which He has put into her heart, provided no one perplexes or obscures her enlightenment.

She has no need of all the parphernalia they wish to give her. But I fear they may depress her, and she needs just the contrary, for her malady is enough for her. If she had been converted in perfect health our Lord would have given her time to acquire strength for the day of adversity. But she has much to bear; she is natural; she has an agreeable turn of mind; she is finding God through her breast. You, my most reverend father, will

complete what remains to be done. She will see you very soon. I should envy her this if I dared to desire anything. I must close this letter by begging you very humbly to excuse its length and by assuring you of my respect and of an attachment to you of which I do not think anyone else is capable.

The malady I have told you of is not open, but there is reason to fear that it will open, which would be the worst thing that could happen in the opinion of the man who has seen it.

Consider this Madame de la Sablière, so deft in transferring her mind from the curiosities of science to the perplexities of love, having nothing to offer to God, her last lover, but the sighs of a stricken bosom! She is still happy in having acquired a new nature, befitting her horrible situation. She is nobly happy in her resignation, her patience and her peace of mind. Happy? ay, blessed, despite the torment and degradation of a devouring evil, in that she is developing an angelic soul. We may say of the woman who wrote this admirable letter that, like Elisabeth Ranquet, "walking upon earth, she was in the heavens."

The disease made rapid progress. Five months later, a few days, it may be a few hours, before her death, Madame de la Sablière wrote to Rancé the following lines, which we cannot read without thinking of what Pascal has said of the misery and the greatness of mankind:

January, 1693.

The sickness that I am suffering from increases daily, my most revered father. It looks as though it will not last much longer. I beg you very humbly that the disease I am suffering from may never be known to anyone either after my death or during my life. God will doubtless reward you for all the good you have done me. And I pray Him to do so with all my heart. I still feel the same tranquillity and the same repose while awaiting the accomplishment of God's will concerning me. I desire nothing else.

She died on the 6th January, 1693, and was buried on the 7th by the clergy of St. Sulpice.*

* These dates are taken from the record of her death, published by Jal in his *Dictionary*. This states that Madame de la Sablière died in the Rue aux Vaches, known also as the Rue aux Vachers, now the Rue Rousselet. But from an article written for *Le Temps*, whose author, M. Georges Villain, has kindly sent me a proof of it, it is evident that Madame de la Sabliére died in the rooms which she occupied in the Incurables, close to the chapel.

M. THÉODORE REINACH AND "MITHRIDATES" *

F the three brothers Reinach, the eldest, Joseph, has made his mark in politics, as a deputy and a publicist; the second, Salomon, is an archæologist, justly esteemed for his zeal and his accuracy; the youngest, Théodore, having displayed an interest in various subjects, has become an historian. I shall not recall the astonishing scholastic victories which he won in the years 1875, 1876 and 1877. Such instances of success, though they doubtless reveal an intellectual precocity and facility, do not strike me as being enviable. They have the disadvantage of placing youth in too powerful a light, and of creating for it an untenable superiority.

It is dangerous to begin by being a prodigy, for no one can remain one for ever. This creates a difficult situation. But it does one little harm if one is a scholar—that is, a modest and laborious person. It is impossible for the true scholar to be other than modest; the more he accomplishes, the more clearly he sees what remains to be accomplished. And in M. Théodore Reinach I think I recognize a mind wholly devoted to the acquirement of knowledge.

His scholastic laurels were still quite fresh when he undertook to translate *Hamlet,* employing, as Shakespeare did, prose and rhyme in alternation.

* *Mithridate Eupator, roi de Pont,* by Théodore Reinach, 1 vol. in 8vo.

The idea seems excellent and natural. But I do not think M. Reinach has realized it as happily as might be. I even doubt whether it can be realized. One might perhaps experiment, in an attempt of this kind, with the employment of extremely supple and untrammelled verse, alternating with rhythmic prose, like that of *La Princesse Maleine*. But is such a thing possible? Is it possible to re-think a poet so vividly that one can re-write his work, with its lyric note and all its harmonies? But for that matter, this is not the question. If I have recalled this experiment of M. Reinach's, it is because it already revealed the scholar, in the verification of the text, the accuracy of the notes and the painstaking research of which the interesting introduction that prefaces the volume gives evidence. In this respect few French translators have realized their duty as clearly as M. Reinach has done, and it would be an excellent thing if his example were followed.

A little later he published an *Histoire des Israélites depuis la dispersion jusqu' à nos jours,* as well as a number of essays in the *Revue des études juives*. He has paid much attention to Hellenic and Oriental antiquities. In a special work, entitled *Trois royaumes de l'Asie Mineure* (1888), he examines the coins struck by the kings of Cappadocia, Bithynia and Pontus. This work deserves particular mention here, since it was, for the author, a sort of preparation for the *Histoire de Mithridate,* and, if I may call it so, the scaffolding of the monument.

Let me, to be quite correct, say one of the scaffoldings, for others were needed. The sources of the history of Mithridates are of three kinds: (1) The medals and coins, which, examined in the

book already mentioned, have furnished the author with the elements of a chronology. They have also given him some indications as to the state of manners and of the arts, as well as the government of the provinces. Lastly, it is on certain fine tetradrachmas struck in Pontus, or at Pergamus, or in Greece, that we find the portrait of Mithridates. (2) The inscriptions. M. Reinach has gathered together twenty-one, Greek as well as Latin. (3) The classic authors. This source is by far the most abundant. But the data which it provides have to be subjected to the most rigorous criticism. We know that the works of those writers who related the history of Mithridates about the time of his reign have not come down to us.

We have neither the Memoirs of Sylla, nor those of Rutilius Rufus, nor the work of Sisena, nor the histories of Sallust, nor Archias' poem, nor the portions of Titus Livius that treat of the Mithridatic war. We are reduced to consulting works which were written a hundred and fifty to three hundred years later than Mithridates' reign, and which consequently borrow their whole historical authority from the documents from which they were compiled. But the ancients hardly ever indicated the sources which they utilized, and it was only by the most assiduous research and the nicest observation that Théodore Reinach was able to recognize the texts that Plutarch, Cappianus and Dion Cassius had before them when they compiled their histories. I shall not enter into the details of these procedures, which belong to the domain of learned criticism. The little that I have said is inspired by that natural taste which makes us all take an interest in effective methods of work.

Works of pure scholarship are outside my province and cannot form the subject of a literary article in the Press, which calls for the ease and variety of subjects. The special and the particular are not for us. Fortunately it not seldom happens that a true scholar is led by the progress of his researches to make those generalizations from which curious minds are able to derive both amusement and profit. At such times I do not fail to absorb the specialist's ideas and to report such of them as I have been able to grasp. I am never so happy as when I have an opportunity of discussing the labours of a Renan or a Darmesteter, a Gaston Paris or a Paul Meyer, an Oppert or a Maspero. Now, while M. Reinach's *Mithridates* is a work of scholarship as regards its method, it belongs to historical literature by the spaciousness of the subject, the interest of the narrative and the abundance of its views. It is a fine book, almost all of which is easy to read, and in parts it is more absorbingly interesting than I can say. The truth is that M. Reinach has chosen an excellent subject. It is new and fertile. The story of Mithridates, which had never been separately dealt with, is one of the finest and most tragic stories in the world.

Even in our days the peasants and fishermen of Ieni-Kalé point out the ancient Panticapæum near Kertch—a rock in the shape of a chair that stands by the edge of the sea. "That," they say, "is the throne of Mithridates!" The man whom legend has set upon this huge barbaric seat preserves even in history a barbaric grandeur.

Of Persian origin, sprung of those Mithridates who lived beyond the ordinary term of human life, leaving infant offspring in their harem, Mithridates,

who was afterwards named Eupator and Dionysos, was reared at Sinope, his native city, and was approaching his thirteenth year when his father, Mithridates Euergetes, perished in one of those tragic and ordinary intrigues of the seraglio which had always determined the succession of the Oriental despots. His mother, the Syrian Laodice, who had felt, in the tedium of the harem, that Euergetes was holding out too long, became sultana by the Oriental right of murder. The young Mithridates, the victim of inexplicable hunting accidents, scenting suspect dishes on his table, promptly perceived that his mother considered that he was growing up too quickly. He fled into the dense forests of Paryadres, where he led the rude life of a hunter and a bandit, alone and unknown. It is reported that he, like the stone giants that were sculptured in Sargon's palace, used to strangle lion-cubs with his hands. After seven years of nights and days spent amid the rocks and forests, he reappeared at Sinope, where he was believed to be dead, claimed his heritage, and wrested territories and treasure, by force and cunning, from the Syrian, who had dissipated three-fourths of them. Swiftly he won back a kingdom for himself and "subjected to his domination, or at least to his influence, the whole of the Black Sea basin."

It was not an empire, but a multitude of peoples. Twenty-two or twenty-five different languages were spoken in it. A maritime kingdom, "the Pontus Euxinus, which gave it its name, gave it also its unity."

The rest is known. I cannot recall it here, even briefly, since it is, as Racine observes, "a considerable portion of Roman history." We are familiar,

too, with the rupture with Rome, which Mithridates had at first treated with circumspection; the conquest of Asia Minor, followed by the massacre of eighty thousand Romans; the Grecian protectorate and the great scheme, in imitation of Alexander, of the union of the Hellenic and the Oriental worlds, which ended cruelly at Chæronæa and Orchomenos; and, after the war with Sylla, the wars of Lucullus and Pompey, which show us, in Montesquieu's words, "not princes already vanquished by self-indulgence and pride, like Antiochus and Tigranus, or by fear, like Philip, Perseus and Jugurtha; but a magnanimous king, who, in his adversity, like a lion regarding his wounds, was only roused to greater indignation" (*Grand. et déc.,* chap. vii).

Lastly, we know (and here I will linger for a moment) that after the defeat of Nicopolis, when his horsemen were butchered to a man, in the night, by Pompey's legionaries, the old king escaped alone on horseback, with his concubine Hypsioratæa clad like one of those barbarian warriors whose heart beat in her bosom. He made his way through the Caucasus, and, reaching the revolted Bosphorus as a fugitive, he reconquered it. This was his last kingdom. Here, forced to abandon Asia to the enemy whom he had been fighting for forty years with invincible hatred, he conceived the project of marching upon the West through Thrace, Macedonia and Pannonia, drawing with him the Scythians of the Sarmatian steppes and the Celts of the Danube, and of hurling himself upon Italy with a torrent of nations.

This gigantic plan is explained by Mithridates in the third act of Racine's tragedy, in a speech imitated from Appienus:

C'est à Rome, mes fils, que je prétends marcher.*

And he adds, a little later:

Ne vous figurez point que de cette contrée
Par d'éternels remparts Rome soit séparée.
Je sais tous les chemins par où je dois passer,
Et si la mort bientôt ne me vient traverser,
Sans reculer plus loin l'effet de ma parole,
Je vous rends dans trois mois au pied du Capitole.
Doutez-vous que l'Euxin ne me porte en deux jours
Aux lieux où le Danube y vient finir son cours? †

"I do doubt it!" cried Prince Eugene of Savoy, who had fought against the Turks. And the inspired victor of Zeptha was justified in doubting whether an armed fleet could in two days cross the width of sea that divides Kertch from the mouths of the Danube, and whether three months would suffice for a great army to cover the seven hundred leagues that lie between Bulgaria and Rome. But these incorrect calculations are to be attributed only to Racine, who apparently was not much of a soldier. It was he who made them, in his own house, on his writing-table, in perfect innocence. No ancient evidence will permit us to impute the error to Mithridates, who is not responsible for the handsome manner in which a poet was pleased to adorn his plans. We know only that the old king "pro-

* It is to Rome, my sons, that I mean to march.
† Do not picture to yourself that this country
Is divided from Rome by eternal ramparts.
I know all the roads by which I must pass,
And if death does not shortly come to thwart me,
Without postponing further the execution of my promise,
I will lead you in three months to the foot of the Capitol.
Do you doubt that the Euxine will bear me in two days
To the place where the Danube comes to end its course in it?

posed to skirt the northern coast of the Euxine, recruiting as he went the Sarmatians and the Bastarnians, and then ascending the valley of the Danube, where the Gaulish tribes, whose friendship he had carefully cultivated, hastened to flock round his standards. Having thus become the generalissimo of the northern barbarians, he was to cross Pannonia and descend like an avalanche from the summits of the Alps upon an Italy emptied of troops and weakened by her political and social quarrels." This plan, whose grandiose nature amazed the ancients, has not been greatly admired by modern historians. Michelet, who is an enthusiast, is just a little stirred as he explains the plan; but Mommsen, who cannot be accused of enthusiasm, regards it only as a pitiable piece of folly. "The projected invasion of Italy by Orientals," he says, "was simply laughable. It was only a chimera of impotent despair." M. Reinach does not share this opinion. He recalls the fact that the Cimbri, forty years previously, had proved that the wall of the Alps was not insurmountable, and that an invasion descending upon Italy in the year 63 before the Christian era, when the country was torn by civil war, might have subjected Rome to the grief and shame that Alaric was to inflict upon her five centuries later. This opinion is a tenable one. But the dispute upon this point will never be settled. Betrayed by his son, abandoned by his peoples, Mithridates put himself to death in the citadel of Panticapæum, in the midst of his preparations for his great undertaking. Still, this alone condemns the enterprise, that it should at the very outset have destroyed its author. No matter! He was a great enemy and he knew how to hate. "He possessed the respectable gifts

of hatred," says Mommsen, and M. Reinach adds: "In this over-excited brain hatred amounted to genius." The Romans, who feared him, rejoiced at his death. The soldiers who came to announce it to Pompey bore laurels as though they had been the messengers of victory.

The difficulty was to identify the body of the terrible sultan. It was so disfigured that it could be recognized only by the old scars with which it was covered. Pompey had it laid to rest in the royal necropolis of Sinope. But it was, above all, by their outbursts of joy that the Romans accorded funeral honours to Mithridates Eupator.

A few years later Rome was again rejoicing over the death of an enemy. This time the enemy was a woman. On the death of Cleopatra, as on that of Mithridates, there were dances and sacrifices in the Eternal City. With Cleopatra, finally perished that warlike East which had disputed the empire with Rome, and cost Italy so much effort and the lives of so many soldiers and citizens. It is evident that M. Reinach feels for Mithridates the kind of interest that an assiduous painter can hardly avoid taking in a model whom he has long been studying. He follows the King of Pontus through all his enterprises with an admixture of admiration and horror. He is astonished, not without reason, by his will, so supple and powerful, his indefatigable energy, his bold and cunning mind, and that indomitable soul which derives fresh resources from defeat, which the ancients compared with a serpent which, when its head is crushed, raises its menacing tail. Nevertheless, when he recollects himself to deliver a general verdict, he is careful not to exalt his hero at the cost

of truth and justice. Here is a passage in which the historian, not without vigour, sums up his opinion of the extraordinary despot whose life he has recorded:

Despite his manifold talents, despite his indefatigable activity, despite his heroic end, something was lacking in Mithridates which prevents him from ranking with the truly great men of history; I mean a lofty ideal, conceived in sincerity and pursued with constancy. What does the man who has been called the Peter the Great of antiquity represent? The cause of liberty, of the Hellenic civilization, or, on the other hand, the reaction of the despotic and fanatical East against the liberal and enlightened West? We do not know; he himself cannot answer the question. We have seen him in the first part of his reign comporting himself as a champion of Hellenism, copying Alexander, retaining the tunic, girding on the sword of the Macedonian conqueror. At one moment it even seemed that he realized his dream, or at least that he had revived the good days of the kingdom of Pergamus; liberated Asia and ancient Greece herself raised on their shoulders, in an impulse of feverish joy, the providential saviour from the remote shores of the Euxine. But the close of his reign will offer us a very different picture. Beneath the Hellenic mask, which soon cracked in all directions, we shall find a hero still, but a barbarian hero, repudiating a borrowed civilization, destroying with his own hands the cities that he has founded, addressing a frantic appeal to the religious and national fanaticism of the ancient peoples of Asia and the nomadic hordes of the North, whose irreconcilable hatred not only of the Roman conqueror, but also of the Mediterranean civilization he seems henceforth to embody. Which is the real Mithridates? The ruler of the Chersonese and Pergamos, or he of Artaxarta and Panticapæum? I fear that neither is the real man; that in these two parts in which he appeared in succession, Mithridates was in truth merely a prodigy of ambition and egoism, a royal tragedian, treating Olympus and Avesta, the memories of Alexander and the relics of Darius, depotism and demagogy, barbarism and civilization, as so many instruments of kingship, so many means of seducing and recruiting men, without ever sharing, in his heart, the passions which he exploits, and remaining calm in the midst of the tempests which he unleashes.

M. Reinach has shown us Mithridates as the sovereign of a shifting kingdom, repeatedly lost and reconquered, incessantly changing its shape and its position. He has shown us this master of so many human lives waging, with an ever unabating ardour, wars interspersed by astonishing victories and defeats. He has shown us the sultan of Pontus in the alternate characters of a conqueror, a diplomatist, a founder of cities, an organizer of provinces, a colonist, a protector of commerce, of the arts and letters, and a destroyer of nations.

This is not all. He has chosen also, as far as this is possible, to show us Mithridates in his private life, reclining on a golden couch at those banquets at which he united the Hellenic orators and rhetoricians with the barbarian officers who bore the envied title of Friends or First Friends to the King. And these pictures are not the least interesting in the book. Mithridates was not, of course, a brilliant and enlightened genius. Mommsen refuses him even any very large measure of intelligence, and M. Reinach admits that he was not a truly great man. But he was assuredly what we call a character. His is a strange figure, standing out in violent relief. Examining it closely, we admire a human animal of his stature and his temper, at once so cunning and so powerful, so ingenuous and so barbaric, and endowed with such tremendous qualities.

We have his portrait on the tetradrachmas. He was handsome, with large features and curling hair. He was a sort of giant. The size of his weapons astonished Pompey. And his armour, suspended in the temples of Delphi and Nemæa, set the visitors wondering; they seemed the spoils of a Titan. His head circled with a sparkling tiara, clothed in the

Eastern fashion in costly robes, wearing the wide Persian trousers, he seemed, in the blaze of his jewels, like the earthly image of the Star-Gods, Ormuzd and Ameria, to whom he burned, as an offering, a forest set upon a mountain. Beneath the outward appearance of an Oriental idol he was the most agile horseman in his army, and had no rival in casting the javelin.

Habitually sober, the spirit moved him one day at table to compete with an athlete, to see whose capacity for food and drink was the greater; and he was victorious. This colossus had a certain delicacy of taste. He collected beautiful gold and silver plate, which was, to be truthful, a form of luxury then common to all great personages. He had formed a rich collection of engraved gems. He loved fine speeches, and he himself spoke with eloquence and in several languages. Lastly, his knowledge of medicine seems to have been fairly extensive and profound, although he mingled with his prescriptions a great many charms and spells.

Like all the dynasts of the East, he was greatly addicted to private murder. Four of his sons were slain at his command: Ariarathes, Mithridates, Machares and Xiphares. But one must consider the concatenation of crimes in this house, and remember that his mother had sought to have him killed, and that one son, whom he spared, Pharnacia, was the cause of his death.

He seems to have a great affection for his daughter, Drypetina, a monster with a double row of teeth in each jaw, and if he had her stabbed by a eunuch it was so that she could not fall living into the hands of the Romans.

Two other daughters, Mithridatis and Mysa, died

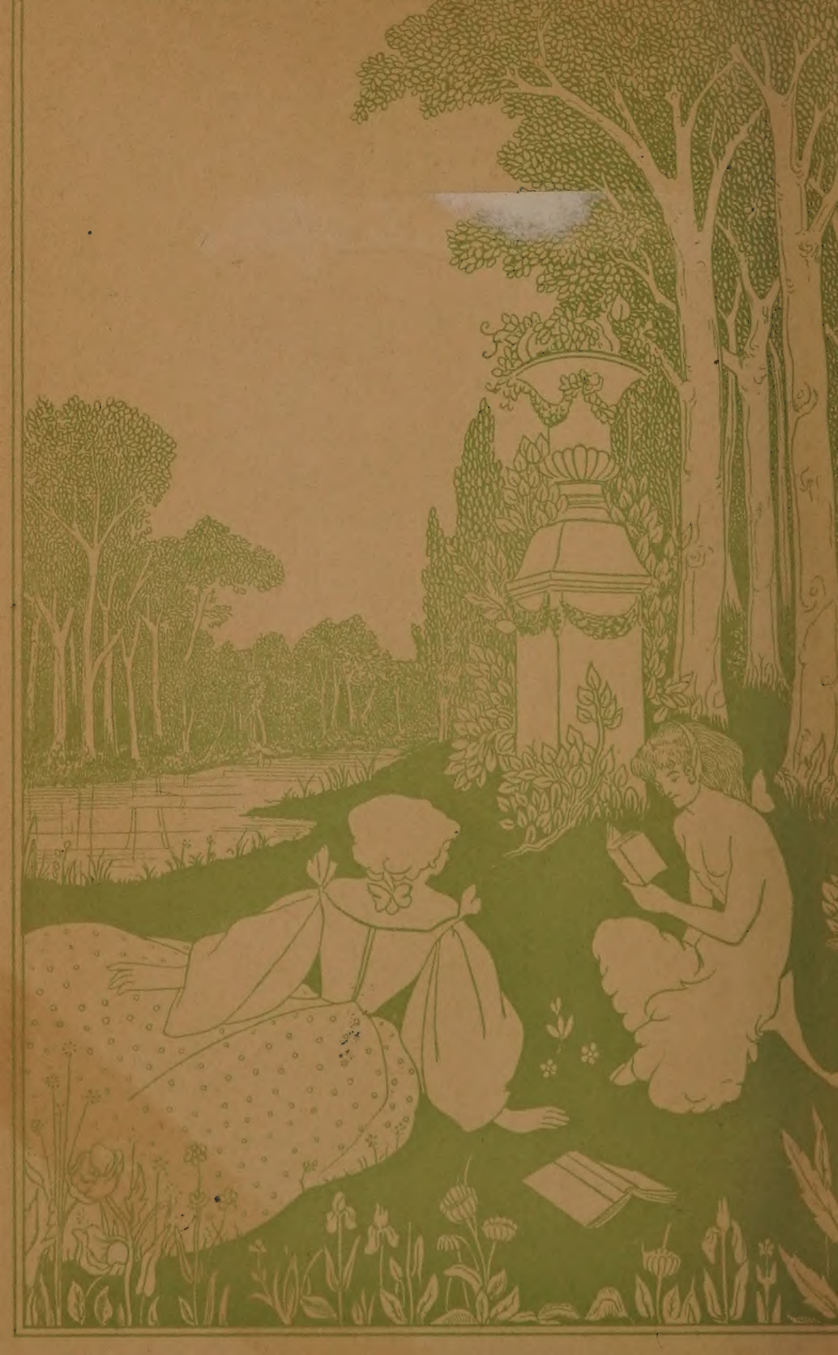
with her at Panticapæum for the same reason. In those days nothing was more usual than the massacre of a whole seraglio after a defeat. Before beating a retreat one killed the women on the enemy's approach, as to-day one destroys encumbering material. After the defeat inflicted by Lucullus on the Pontic army at Cabira, Mithridates, escaping to Comana, sent the eunuch Bacchides to Pharnacia with orders to kill all the women of the seraglio. Among them were two of the king's sisters, Roxana and Statira, forty years of age, who were both unmarried, and two of his wives, both Ionians, Berenice of Chios and Monima of Stratonicea. Monima had refused the fifteen thousand pieces of gold with which Mithridates had sought to buy her. The King of Pontus had to send her the royal fillet. For that matter, this was a present that cost little to this notable maker of queens.

At a later date, in the archives of Castelnuovo, near Cabira, a series of letters exchanged between Monima and Mithridates was discovered. Their licentious tone shocked the modesty of the Romans. But, imprisoned far from Greece, in a seraglio, under the guard of barbarian soldiers, the proud Ionian bitterly regretted her own country and her liberty. Bacchides brought the women the order to die in the manner that each of them thought the quickest and least painful. Berenice sent for a draught of poison. Her mother, who was with her, begged her to share it. They both drank. The mother was the first to die; and as Berenice was writhing in horrible agony, Bacchides ended the matter by stifling her. Roxana and Statira also chose poison. The first died cursing her brother. But Roxana, on the other hand, praised him, inasmuch as in the midst of all

the dangers by which he himself was surrounded he had not forgotten them, but had enabled them to die in freedom, sheltered from outrage. Monima, perhaps remembering the tragic queens of the poets, removed from her brow the royal fillet, knotted it round her neck and hanged herself, like Phædra, from a peg. But the flimsy fabric broke.

Plutarch has preserved the sorrowful words which, according to him, the young woman then uttered: "Fatal diadem!" she cried, "you will not do me even this service!" And she presented her throat to the eunuch. Thus died Monima of Stratonicea, in the seraglio of Pharnacia, after much mortification.

It will doubtless seem somewhat abrupt to end with this scene of domestic tragedy the history of the great Asiatic whom Sylla, Lucullus and Pompey won fame in fighting. But this scene of women, poisoned, stifled or bled to death by a eunuch reveals, perhaps, better than any warlike records, the real Mithridates, the aged sultan of Pontus, the despot, the Oriental.



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